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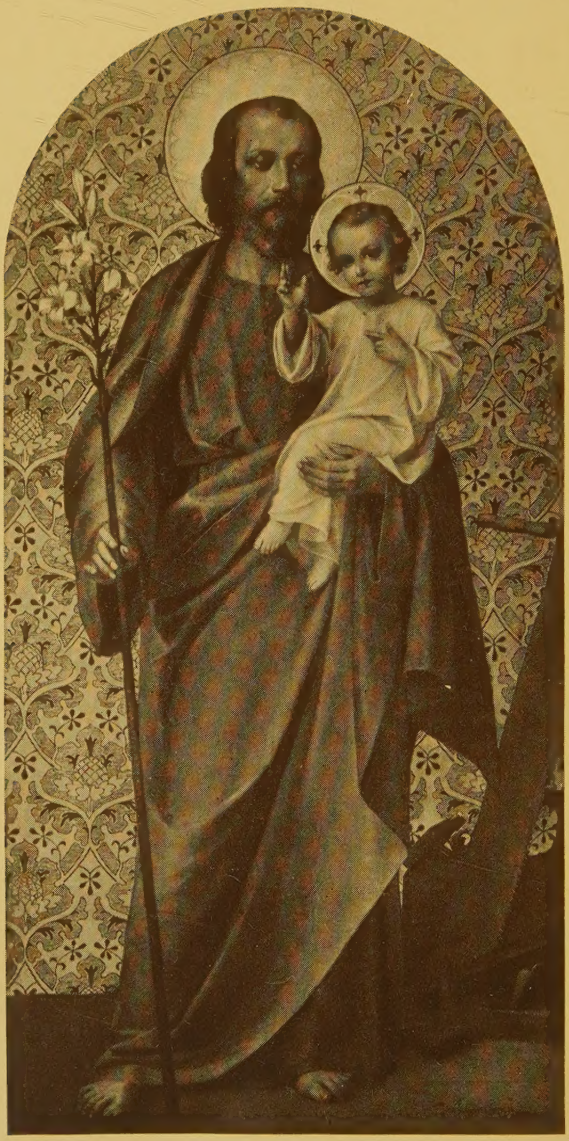

St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church,
pray for us.

GO TO JOSEPH

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CONSIDERATIONS ON THE LIFE AND VIRTUES OF ST. JOSEPH, WITH EXAMPLES FOR EACH DAY OF THE MONTH

BY

VERY REV. ALEXIS M. LEPICIER, O.S.M.

Author of "The Fairest Flower of Paradise," etc.

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PREFACE [1]

THERE is something wonderful in the manner in which devotion to St. Joseph has developed of late years. Not a land nor country is there at the present day where the name of the holy Patriarch is not known and invoked; not a Catholic heart but rejoices upon hearing his praises proclaimed. And not only individual Christians have recourse to him, but whole nations have placed themselves under his powerful protection. Among the various Religious Orders scattered throughout the world, there is hardly one that does not invoke him as its special patron. The Sovereign Pontiffs appear to have vied with the Christian people in furthering this devotion. To quote only a few recent instances: Pius IX solemnly proclaimed St. Joseph "Patron of the Universal Church;" his successor, Leo XIII, proposed him to the world as a model of virtue and sanctity; and Pius X approved his litany and raised the feast of the Patronage to the rank of first class.

In view of such eloquent facts, it is impossible not to see here the action of the Holy Ghost,

[1] To the first Italian Edition.

who directs the destiny of the Church with infinite wisdom, and provides her with means of sanctification proportionate to the needs of the times.

Words are wanting to describe adequately how useful this devotion to St. Joseph is to every class of people. First of all, contemplative souls find in the practise of this devotion a powerful incentive to pursue their journey along the road to mystical union with God; sinners have in it an efficacious means to turn from the road of perdition on to that of justice; youths, a potent remedy against temptations of sense; persons in the married state, an incentive to give themselves with renewed fervor to the practise of the domestic virtues; the poor, consolation in their privations, and resignation to the dispositions of Providence; the dying, comfort in the last hour of their pilgrimage on this earth.

These, in short, are the numerous advantages which accrue from this devotion, to the different members forming the great family of the Catholic Church. And for this reason, as Pope Pius X said not many years ago, "it is most opportune to Christianity, especially in the present time, to endeavor to propagate ever more and more true piety and devotion to the most holy Patriarch St. Joseph, whom the Catholic

Church honors as her special patron before God." [2]

If we investigate the origin of the many evils that afflict society at large, it will be seen that these spring mainly from man's rebellion against lawfully constituted authority; nay, against the very order established by God, who so disposed that there should be inequality in the different grades of society. This spirit of rebellion has given rise to a feeling of general discontent, from which modern socialism with its baneful consequences has sprung. If we wish further to go to the root of that spirit of insubordination and rebellion, it will be found to lie in the breaking of that sacred bond of subjection, love and peace which should unite together the members of each family. Matrimony is to-day considered by many to be but a mere contract, which may be rent asunder by mutual consent; and as a result there is lacking that reciprocal love and mutual respect between husband and wife, parents and children, so essential to the well-being of each Christian family.

Now, to counteract this evil a remedy can be found in the example and patronage of St. Joseph. He was the most faithful of spouses and

[2] "Est enim peropportunum, his maxime rei christianæ temporibus, incrementa quærere solidæ pietatis et religionis erga Patriarcham sanctissimum, quem Ecclesia Catholica patronum suum peculiarem apud Deum agnoscit." Brief *Quod nos certiores facis,* to Rev. Alexis M. Lépicier, O.S.M., 2 Febr., 1908.

most loving of fathers. The Holy Family was a true sanctuary of peace and harmony. Jesus and Mary loved the holy Patriarch; they reverenced him and were in turn loved and reverenced by him. Further, St. Joseph, although raised to the dignity of foster-father of the Son of God made Man, lived in poverty and was obliged to provide for the needs of the Holy Family by the sweat of his brow; yet he remained content in his poverty; he did not go in search of riches, dignities or honors. Such an example, then, cannot but contribute greatly to recall the faithful to the simplicity of the Gospel and to perfect submission of our will to that of God in whatever state and condition Divine Providence has placed us.

There is still another reason for which a fervent devotion to the glorious Patriarch can not be too greatly inculcated. If we consider ever so little the religious condition of modern society, we must acknowledge that there is now an evident diminution of that spirit of simple and lively faith that so distinguished our forefathers. With the extension of material progress, the spirit of faith has gradually been weakened. A certain school has been formed whose object is to cast doubts on the holiest truths of religion. It almost seems as if those calamitous times had arrived of which our divine Saviour spoke when He anxiously asked His

disciples: "But yet the Son of Man, when He cometh, shall He find, think you, faith on earth?" [3]

Now, among the means ordained by God to check or avert this threatening general apostasy must no doubt be enumerated a firm and constant devotion to St. Joseph. The most chaste spouse of Mary believed, without hesitating, the word of the angel who announced to him the good tidings of the wonderful conception of the Son of God in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary his most holy spouse. To him also we are indebted for the preservation of our Saviour's life from the cruel sword of Herod. Furthermore, St. Joseph fulfilled toward Mary the office of a faithful husband, and toward Jesus that of a most loving father. To him, therefore, we may have recourse with absolute confidence to obtain of God the grace of remaining unscathed by the fatal spirit of infidelity and materialism that would destroy the work of Jesus Christ. By devoutly honoring and invoking St. Joseph, we may hope to preserve intact in our hearts the sacred deposit of faith received at holy Baptism.

The present book, written during spare moments for the spiritual solace of the author, has for its object to further this excellent devotion among the faithful. It contains a series

[3] Luke, xviii, 8.

of considerations on the life of St. Joseph such as the holy Gospels and authorized traditions suggest. To each of these considerations is appended an example, taken as far as possible from authenticated sources. These serve to confirm the power of the holy Patriarch's intercession, as well as to show the universality of his patronage.

A collection of the principal prayers and practises of devotion in honor of the Saint, which the Sovereign Pontiffs have enriched with indulgences, has been added to the book for the use of the faithful. An analytical index placed at the end of the book enables the reader to grasp at a glance the object proposed for his meditation or consideration for each day of the month.

May the gentle Saint deign to accept this token of our deep affection for him and of our unlimited trust in his power! May he take under his fatherly protection both the reader and the writer, and conduct them to the possession of that blessed land which is the reward of the merits which we shall have procured here below, that we may rejoice forever with him and his most holy spouse in the infinite bliss procured to us by his foster Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and most loving Saviour.

FOREWORD

THE present volume is a compendium of a larger Latin work on St. Joseph which forms part of my *Institutiones Theologicæ* and which I was wont to explain to my many ecclesiastical students while holding the chair of dogmatic theology in the college of Propaganda, Rome.

It was then suggested to me that the matter contained in this theological treatise might well prove available to the Christian people if only that much of the book which appeals to the lay reader were put in the vernacular and adapted for spiritual use particularly during the month of March.

Thus, the volume was published in different European languages, being at the same time enriched with examples for each day.

An opportunity having presented itself to have the book published in America, I readily availed myself of the same, moved by a desire to thus give my former American students, who now hold offices as pastors, professors or bishops, a token of my lasting affection, while enabling them to put into the hands of their

flocks or lay friends a book written by their former professor and reproducing the praises and virtues of the great Patriarch St. Joseph, that model of Christian virtues, whom they had particularly learned to love and reverence in the classroom of Propaganda.

In return, I ask my American friends, who have given me frequent and unequivocal signs of affectionate gratitude, to recommend me to the holy spouse of the Mother of God, in order that my labors in the theological field may not be in vain, but that I may receive in heaven the crown of justice promised to those who faithfully serve Our Lord in this life.

Assumption of Our Blessed Lady, 1924.

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GO TO JOSEPH

First Day

ST. JOSEPH IN THE DESIGNS OF GOD

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee." (JER. XXXI, 3.)

GOD is all powerful, and to attain His end He is not bound to have recourse to any special means. Wherefore, if He select one means in preference to another, He does so for some particular reason, for all His works bear the mark of justice, wisdom and truth. To search into the high motives which led God to adopt one course of action rather than another is indeed a most fruitful and delightful occupation. It is also a source of consolation to our souls. Accordingly, we shall investigate the reason why God decreed that His beloved Son, our Redeemer, should be born of a Virgin espoused to St. Joseph.

The first motive is that God intended St. Joseph to coöperate in a certain way in the work

of our Redemption. It had been decreed from all eternity that this great work should be brought about by the voluntary sacrifice of the Son of God made Man, who should be both the Victim chosen for the sacrifice, and the immolating Priest. But it was necessary that this Priest-Victim, who was to be born of the Blessed Virgin Mary, should be nourished and provided for, especially in the early years of His mortal life. Now this sublime office was entrusted to St. Joseph, who, on Christmas night, received into his fatherly arms the new-born Jesus from the hands of the Virgin Mother, in order that he might clothe and nourish Him, and protect His life from the evil designs of His enemies.

Thus was St. Joseph destined to become an efficient instrument in the work of our Redemption; and as he was to be invested with such a high dignity, it was just that he should become an object of special love on the part of the Almighty, who had chosen him before all ages to be the co-worker of His Son made Man. Truly, therefore, may we call St. Joseph great among all men for having been appointed the guardian of the august Victim of Golgotha, Jesus Christ, the High Priest of our confession.[1]

* * *

St. Joseph was not only chosen to coöperate with Jesus Christ in the salvation of mankind;

[1] Heb., iii, 1.

he was also divinely appointed to fulfill a great and important office connected with the mystery of the Incarnation, for, by his presence, he was to cover, as with a chaste veil, the supernatural conception of the Son of God from the eyes of an unbelieving and material world.

As it behoved our divine Lord to be untarnished by original sin, so it was necessary that He should be conceived of a Woman through the operation of the Holy Ghost. It was not becoming, however, that His supernatural conception should be made known immediately to the Jews. These, being too imperfect and unable to grasp so lofty a mystery, might have been moved to doubt the reality of Christ's human nature, had they known that His birth was unlike that of other children. They might easily have regarded the new-born Babe as a mere phantom. The presence of St. Joseph, therefore, was intended to conceal from the eyes of the world the virginal conception of Jesus in the womb of the Mother of God. In the divine plan, this august mystery was to be revealed to the faithful, only when grace should have prepared them to believe it rightly.

Moreover, it was the Jewish custom that genealogies should be traced through the fathers, and not through the mothers. From the fact, then, that Mary and Joseph were united in the holy bonds of wedlock, the gen-

ealogy of Jesus Christ could easily be traced through His foster-father, St. Joseph.

We cannot here sufficiently admire the wonderful dispositions of God, who so ordains all things as to hide the mysteries of our Faith from the proud and incredulous, and reveals them to the humble and clean of heart.

* * *

St. Joseph was also predestined in the designs of God to be the companion of Mary, her guardian and protector in time of need, and the witness of her perpetual virginity.

The love which God has for the most blessed Virgin is beyond all that we can imagine. We may affirm with certainty that Mary is, after Jesus, the first object of the divine complacency. The reason of this love of benevolence is to be found in her exalted dignity of Mother of Jesus and co-Redemptress of the world. Now, God's special love for Mary urged Him to provide with particular care for her spiritual and material welfare, especially for the preservation of her honor. But how was God to bring this about? He effected it by espousing Mary to St. Joseph. St. Joseph was to succor, comfort and assist the Holy Virgin in the trials of life; he was, moreover, to be a truthful witness to, and faithful guardian of, her glorious virginity.

Incomparable indeed is the dignity of St. Joseph, who was chosen to be the inseparable

companion of the Mother of God, a support and comfort to her in the sorrows of life, a defender against the assaults of her enemies, a vindicator of her divine maternity and of her perpetual virginity.

Example

Devotion of the Sovereign Pontiffs to St. Joseph

The great Patriarch St. Joseph has not always been honored in the Church as much as he is at the present day. This may be a cause of wonder to such as are wont to view the events of the world in a superficial manner only. But if we attentively consider the ways of God, we shall see that the oblivion in which St. Joseph was first left and the gradual growth of devotion to him in the Church is in harmony with the special character of his mission.

The peculiar office of St. Joseph was to screen the mystery of the Incarnation from unworthy eyes, and to lead for many years a humble and retired life with Jesus and Mary. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that after his death he should have had to remain for a time in the background, as it were, and that he should not have been honored at once with that respect and veneration which become so great a Patriarch.

Divine Providence, who orders all things according to measure, weight and number, had decreed that devotion to St. Joseph should be propagated among Christian peoples only in the course of time, and that it should spread gradually to the greater advantage of souls. And, thus, God, who exalts the humble when and how He sees fit, ordained that His foster-father should receive in these latter times such tokens of honor and reverence as are inferior only to those paid to His Holy Mother.

Among the devout clients of the holy Patriarch none have labored so much to implant and nurture in the hearts of the faithful devotion and reverence to him, as the Roman Pontiffs, who suffered no opportunity to pass without decreeing new and higher tributes of homage, reverence, and veneration to him, and thereby induced the faithful to implore his help and protection.

This is not the place to relate all that the popes have done to promote true devotion to the holy spouse of Mary. Suffice it to mention Sixtus IV, who inserted his feast in the Roman Breviary and the Missal; Gregory XV, who, by a decree of May 8, 1621, commanded his festival to be celebrated throughout Christendom under a double rite; Clement X, who, on December 6, 1670, raised the same feast to a double of the second class; Clement XI, who,

by his decree of February 4, 1714, ordered the feast to be celebrated with a special Mass and Office; Benedict XIII, who, on December 19, 1726, decreed that the name of St. Joseph should be inserted in the litany of the Saints.

But of all the Sovereign Pontiffs, the one who contributed most to the growth of devotion to St. Joseph was Pope Pius IX, of saintly memory, who from early childhood had been a devoted client of the foster-father of Jesus. This illustrious Pontiff, on September 10, 1847, extended the feast of the patronage of St. Joseph to the whole Church, this feast having been at first commemorated in certain localities only; at the same time he raised it to a double of the second class. Twenty-three years later, on December 8, 1870, in answer to the petitions of all the Catholic bishops and peoples of Christendom, he solemnly declared St. Joseph "Patron of the Universal Church."

His successor, Leo XIII, also showed himself anxious to promote devotion to the holy Patriarch St. Joseph. On August 15, 1889,[2] he dedicated to his memory an encyclical letter, in which he brought out with a masterly pen the sweet and heavenly figure of the glorious spouse of Mary, exalted his virtues, and recommended the faithful to place themselves under his powerful protection.

[2] Ep. Encycl. *Quamquam pluries.*

Of late years, the Sovereign Pontiff Pius X, who had received in Baptism the name of Joseph, raised the solemnity of the patronage of St. Joseph to a double of the first class, showing thereby how advantageous to the individual believer and to the entire Church is the protection of a Saint who is so dear to the Heart of Jesus and so near to the throne of the Almighty.[3]

Prayer

O God, who didst predestine St. Joseph to be the foster-father of the Incarnate Word and the true spouse of the Queen of Virgins, and who, moreover, didst choose him to be associated with Jesus and Mary in the work of our Redemption, grant me I beseech Thee, through the intercession of this great Saint, that I may always correspond with Thy grace, so that the sufferings of my Saviour and those of His sorrowful Mother may not be in vain for me. Amen.

[3] Motu proprio *Supremi disciplinæ*, Jul. 2, 1911. See also the recent Decree *Cum Sanctissimus*, Oct. 28, 1913.

Second Day

ST. JOSEPH PREDESTINED, NEXT TO MARY, ABOVE ALL SAINTS AND ANGELS

"In the multitude of the elect she (Wisdom) shall have praise. And among the blessed she shall be blessed."

(Ecclus. xxiv, 4.)

ST. JOSEPH was predestined to the dignity of foster-father of the Word Incarnate, a dignity next in order after that of the Mother of God. It was right, therefore, that he should also be predestined to possess on earth a grace greater than that of any other saint excepting the Blessed Virgin, and that he should be privileged after this life to occupy in heaven the highest seat of glory after that of his immaculate spouse. As a matter of fact, St. Joseph surpassed in sanctity all the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Dispensation, as also all the saints of the New Testament, not excepting the apostles themselves. Nay more, his holiness and grace excelled that of the very angels themselves, outstripping even the highest among the Seraphim.

That St. Joseph by far exceeded in holiness the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Law may be gathered from the fact that he was holier than Joseph the son of Jacob, the holiest of the patriarchs; and greater than John the Baptist, the greatest among the prophets. A copy is always inferior to its pattern. Now, the Patriarch Joseph, son of Jacob, was but a figure of the new Joseph. He was, therefore, less perfect than the foster-father of Jesus. As regards St. John the Baptist, we may again assert that St. Joseph surpassed him in sanctity. For though Christ said that among them that are born of women, there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist,[1] still, this is to be understood as far as the office of prophet is concerned. But when it comes to a question of grace, St. John must give way to the foster-father of Jesus, who by his intimate and life-long association with the Incarnate Word, received from Him a continual increase of grace.

We may conclude, then, that wondrous was the sanctity of St. Joseph, which serves to measure the degree of holiness of the saints of the Old Testament as a term fixed by eternal decree.

* * *

The New Dispensation is by excellence a law of grace. God had so disposed that its first apostles, taught as they were by the Incarnate

[1] MATT., XI, 11.

Word personally, should receive more abundantly than the rest of mankind of the grace brought to the world by Him. Hence it is a common sentiment in the Church, that the divine Master gave them greater gifts of grace than to other men in general. Two exceptions, however, are to be made: one in favor of the Blessed Virgin, the other on behalf of St. Joseph. Mary is the Mother of God, and therefore she is nearer to the fountain-head of grace than any other creature whatsoever. But St. Joseph, too, approached the Divine Word nearer even than the apostles, for he fulfilled a higher office in the economy of salvation than they. It was but just and proper, then, that he should receive a greater abundance of grace than they, and that he should be foreordained to a loftier seat of glory in heaven.

It is a fact that St. Joseph, by taking care of the divine Child, by feeding and clothing Him, by defending Him from the cruel persecutions of His sworn enemies, took an active part in the glorious work of our Redemption. He became, in a way, the chosen minister of our salvation. Further, by the care he took of his holy spouse, procuring for her the necessaries of life, consoling her in her anguish, and assisting her in her hardships, he shared in her merit as the co-Redemptress of the world. Certainly, all this is enough to justify the title given him of

"Protector of the Church," which has Christ for its father and Mary for its mother. No place, therefore, was befitting St. Joseph, in grace as well as in glory, but the first among the saints both of the Old and the New Law. It is but meet that he should rank above the rest of the predestined in the same degree as his dignity of foster-father of Jesus and spouse of Mary excels their own dignity. It is likewise befitting that he who bears the title of "Patron of the Universal Church" should rank first among all the saints, not excluding the apostles themselves.

* * *

The Church Triumphant consists not only of the just who have borne courageously the trials of this life and have entered with Christ into eternal glory, but it numbers also that glorious phalanx of celestial spirits who in the hour of their great trial remained steadfast in their allegiance to God. In the beginning the creative word of the Almighty called into existence a numberless host of angelic beings whom He distributed into three Hierarchies, each being divided into three distinct Choirs. These angels He arrayed in the vesture of sanctifying grace and destined to enjoy forever the vision of Himself, provided they should persevere in His friendship. But, alas! many of them, drawn away by the first and noblest of their number,

Lucifer, became proud of themselves and were forthwith estranged from their Lord. In consequence they perished miserably, being condemned forever to hell fire. Their irreparable fall left it to men, who should prove more faithful than they, to occupy the vacant thrones of bliss of which they had become unworthy.

But who will that favored man be who shall merit the throne of Lucifer, and possess in heaven the primacy over men and angels? Who but the humble St. Joseph, the chaste spouse of Mary and foster-father of Jesus? He it was who, after Mary, came nearer than any other creature to the well-spring of all graces, and who always perfectly corresponded with the graces he had received. Whereas Lucifer, in his pride, incited his partisans to disloyalty and rebellion against their God and Maker; St. Joseph, on the contrary, by his shining example invites the whole world to follow and revere Jesus Christ our Lord. He thus deserves to occupy the throne left vacant by that proud spirit.

When contemplating the high seat of glory which St. Joseph attained in heaven, we cannot but admire the infinite power of the grace of Christ which worked such a wonder.

Example

DEVOTION OF RELIGIOUS ORDERS TO ST. JOSEPH

Persons freely embracing a life of perfection in the religious state are truly said to be the elect portion of the Church of Jesus Christ. It is not surprising, therefore, that since St. Joseph is the protector of the Universal Church, the members of the different Religious Communities should vie with one another, as it were, in nourishing a sincere devotion to this great Saint.

In the twelfth century there was near Bologna, in Italy, a sanctuary dedicated to St. Joseph. In course of time this sanctuary was transferred from the Benedictine monks, who first had it, to the Friars Servants of Mary, known in this country as the Servites.

Such was the devotion of the Servants of Mary toward the glorious spouse of their Queen that when St. Pius V requested them to exchange their abode for that of the Dominican nuns situated outside the city walls, they petitioned that the title of St. Joseph should be transferred to their new church. This was easily granted. Thus, in their new sanctuary they were able to continue their pious devotion in honor of the holy Patriarch, to the spiritual advantage of the faithful.

The Servants of Mary strove in various ways, but particularly by preaching and solemn services, to further devotion to the holy Patriarch. They looked upon this as one of their peculiar duties because, consecrated as they were by profession to the spreading of devotion to the sorrowful Mother of God, they were aware that nothing pleases her more than to see her pure spouse, who shared in her anguish and sorrow, held in honor and veneration by all. To sound his praises still more and implore his aid, the Servants of Mary, at a General Chapter of the Order held at Orvieto in 1324, further enacted a decree for the purpose of commemorating his feast-day on the nineteenth of March. This was well nigh four centuries before Gregory XV ordered his festival to be celebrated throughout the Christian world.

Not less devoted to St. Joseph were the sons of St. Dominic, as may be inferred from the lives of many holy members of this illustrious Order. The Dominican friar Bartholomew of Trent wrote a life of the holy Patriarch; St. Vincent Ferrer interspersed throughout his beautiful and soul-stirring sermons the wonderful virtues of St. Joseph; and the learned friar Isidore of Isolani was the first to attempt to reduce to a theological tract the mysteries relating to the life and virtues of our dear Saint.

Neither were the Franciscans wanting in fervent zeal for the honor of St. Joseph. In the year 1389, at a General Chapter of the Order assembled at Assisi, they decided to keep his feast with an Office of nine lessons.

But what of the Order of the Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel? Even were there no documents to attest the filial devotion which was early practised by the Carmelite monks and nuns toward St. Joseph, the special example which the illustrious St. Teresa set to the Religious of both sexes of this renowned Order would alone suffice. It was she who gave a special impulse to that great movement in favor of the devotion to St. Joseph which was soon to become universal and to reach its climax as it did in the last century.

The Carthusian monks also shared in a similar veneration for St. Joseph, as is confirmed by the following fact. In the beginning of the seventeenth century the novitiates of the Order, owing to dearth of vocations, were almost depleted. The Fathers, in their perplexity, convoked a General Chapter, in which it was decreed that they should have recourse to the intercession of St. Joseph. Upon this the capitular Fathers adopted the following resolution: they named St. Joseph one of the special patrons of the Order and also decreed that his feast should be celebrated as solemnly as pos-

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sible. From that moment the influx of vocations was so large and of such worth that every fear of the Order's perishing soon disappeared.

It would take too long to recall each of the Religious Orders or Congregations in particular which practises a special devotion to St. Joseph. It may be said in truth that there is hardly a Religious Community that has not selected the holy Patriarch as its patron and protector, or does not honor him by special marks of devotion, receiving in turn from his bounty plentiful signs of assistance and blessing.

Prayer

I bless and thank Thee, O Lord, for having predestined the foster-father of Thy Son Jesus Christ above all saints and angels of paradise. Grant me, I beseech Thee, so to correspond with Thy graces that I may merit to obtain eternal glory in heaven. Amen.

Third Day

HOW THE PREDESTINATION OF ST. JOSEPH WAS ORDAINED TO MANIFEST THE GLORY OF GOD

"The Lord hath made all things for Himself." (Prov. xvi, 4.)

GOD is infinitely happy in Himself, and therefore has no need of any creature whatsoever. Hence, in drawing the world out of nothing He could not have had in view the increase of His own bliss or greatness. On the other hand, He is the first beginning and last end of all things; and so it was impossible that He should have willed anything, however small this might be, without ordaining it to His own glory. Wherefore, having made the heavens and the earth, *"He saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good."*[1] Now, the goodness of the things of this world consists principally in their being directed to God's glory and to the exterior manifestation of His attributes. It follows that the higher a creature is, the more it is apt to show forth the divine perfections. As St. Joseph, then, was invested

[1] Gen., i, 31.

with the exalted dignity of spouse of Mary and foster-father of Jesus, it follows that his predestination was eminently fitted to display the glory of God and to place His infinite attributes in clear relief.

This is a profound and vital truth, and one which it would be well for us ever to bear in mind. We ought to reflect on this fact and try to convince ourselves that we are in this world for no other purpose than to give glory to Him who is the author of our being. Were we deeply impressed with this great fact, we could repeat with Our Lord: *"I honor My Father . . . . I seek not My own glory."* [2]

* * *

These four attributes—wisdom, justice, goodness and power—are conspicuous in all the works of God. Now, we see them set forth in an admirable manner in the predestination of St. Joseph. Let us consider each of them in particular.

First of all, wisdom consists in finding an easy and prompt method of applying the apt means to obtain a fixed end. Now, the presence of St. Joseph was, within the sanctuary of the Holy Family, the means, simple and appropriate, ordained by God to screen from a proud and material world the awful mystery of the

[2] JOHN, VIII, 49, 50.

conception of the Word Incarnate in the womb of a stainless Virgin.

The attribute of justice appears no less wonderfully in the predestination of St. Joseph. The Redemption of the human race is, in truth, the work by excellence in which the divine justice is seen in all its splendor. When the time had come for Christ to expire upon the cross amid untold agony and reproach, He could well testify that He had made rigorous satisfaction to His heavenly Father for all the transgressions of mankind. Now, who, after Mary, the co-Redemptress of the world, had a more intimate part in this great work of atonement than St. Joseph, to whose paternal care had been committed the keeping of the holy Victim unto the day of sacrifice?

The attribute of goodness, which consists in this, that God bestows His riches both natural and supernatural on His creatures, was also made very conspicuous in the predestination of St. Joseph. If it is true that the Creator of all things never fails to grant His graces to His creatures according to their wants, how great must have been the supply with which He enriched him whom He had called to the sublime office of foster-father of His Son? In very truth St. Joseph may be said to be a prodigy of the divine liberality.

Not less clearly is the attribute of divine

power manifested in the predestination of St. Joseph. Can there be anything more extraordinary than that a humble artisan, totally destitute of the goods and riches of this world, should have been deputed to guard the precious life of the Redeemer of the world, who from His very cradle was sought to death by the most cruel and powerful of enemies?

Let us give thanks to God for having disposed things with so much wisdom, that the predestination of St. Joseph to the office of foster-father of Jesus should be the cause of men arriving at a better knowledge of the divine attributes and of giving Him infinite honor and glory.

* * *

Divine Wisdom, which foreordained St. Joseph to the sublime office of foster-father of Jesus, likewise destines every man for some special duty, the accomplishment of which is, in God's design, calculated to bring an increase of extrinsic glory to the Most Holy Trinity.

There is no position in life, be it ever so humble and obscure, in which man, provided he carefully fulfills his obligations, cannot give God special honor and glory. Nay, it often happens that God gathers more praise and glory from the poor and lowly than from the great and mighty. The life of a poor and unpretending person may, indeed, appear vile and con-

temptible to the world, but in the sight of God it may be of real high value. People in a low and needy position may practise the Christian virtues with perfection, and consequently may give great glory to our divine Lord. Thus, St. Joseph's life was in fact deemed worthy of contempt by an unbelieving world; the rich men of Bethlehem would not give him shelter when he wandered from house to house: yet how much honor and glory did not this lowly artisan give to God!

We should remember that we are in this world only to give honor to God; and, indeed, whatever may happen, we must eventually contribute our share of glory to Him, whether we do so willingly or not. But there is this to be borne in mind, that if we correspond faithfully with divine grace and contribute by our holy lives to manifest God's sanctity, we shall be awarded an everlasting happiness. If, on the other hand, we despise God's law and thereby fail to attain the end for which we were made, we shall still give honor to Him, but by being consigned to eternal punishment. We shall, in the first case, contribute in manifesting God's infinite mercy; in the second, His everlasting justice. It is for us to decide what course we shall choose to follow.

Example

ST. TERESA OF JESUS

Among the saints who have shown themselves particularly devout to St. Joseph, the holy Mother Teresa of Jesus deserves a very special mention. In her own life she relates that when a young girl she had been declared tubercular by physicians, and that moreover she had fallen victim to a dreadful nervous malady which resulted in her becoming so crippled that she could not walk unassisted. In this painful state she had recourse to St. Joseph; nor was her confidence misplaced, for the holy Patriarch not only cured her of her physical ailment, but also brought her back to the perfect use of her limbs. From thenceforth, as she herself attests, she never ceased to experience the assistance of this merciful Saint.

St. Teresa was wont to affirm that she never prayed to St. Joseph in vain. "It is really marvelous," these are her words, "what grace God has bestowed on me through the intercession of St. Joseph, and how he has delivered me from many perils both of body and soul. .... It is now many years since I made it a point to request of him some particular favor on his feast-day, and never has he refused my petition. If at any time I sought for something which

would not have been good for me, St. Joseph corrected my petition, always granting me a better gift than the one for which I had asked."

For this reason she concludes: "It seems as if God had bestowed upon the saints in general the power of succoring us in some specified necessity; but to St. Joseph He has granted the power to help us in all our needs. Our Lord," she adds, "wishes us hereby to understand that as He made Himself subject to St. Joseph on earth, so also in heaven He is ready to do whatever the holy Patriarch may now ask. Should you doubt my words I beseech you, through the love of God, to put my statement to test, and you will learn by experience what great gifts he receives who recommends himself with devotion to this illustrious Patriarch."

But the saintly Mother Teresa exhorts persons of prayer in particular to have recourse to St. Joseph. She again says: "Let him who has not as yet found a master to teach him how to pray go to St. Joseph and he will never go amiss." It is not, then, to be wondered at if the holy Carmelite virgin proved an ardent promoter of devotion to St. Joseph, after whom she would name all her monasteries and under whose guardianship she would place the entire Order which she had reformed.[3]

St. Teresa also knew how to infuse into her

[3] *Vita della S. Madre Teresa di Gesù*, c. 6, Venice, 1709.

spiritual daughters a love for the holy Patriarch similar to her own. Let it suffice to mention Sister Mary of St. Joseph, who on the day of her profession took the chaste spouse of Mary for her special patron. This devout disciple of Teresa lost her speech during the last four days of her life and, moreover, was left a prey to a most excruciating agony. It seemed as if God had permitted that she should experience some of the bitter anguish which filled the soul of her holy patron when he saw the pregnancy of Mary while still unacquainted with the mystery of the virginal conception of Jesus. All that Sister Mary of St. Joseph could then do, was to abandon herself entirely to the disposition of the divine will.

It was during one of these acts of love and resignation that this faithful disciple of St. Teresa breathed forth her pure soul into the hands of her Creator. On the same day a Carmelite nun of the same convent beheld her surrounded with glory, and Our Lord, pointing to her, said to this nun: "This is one of the number of those following the Lamb." Thus was the soul of this saintly Sister preserved from purgatory's fire, owing to the acts of perfect resignation to the will of God which she had performed in honor and in imitation of those of her holy patron, St. Joseph.[4]

[4] B. Bouix, *Sainte Thérèse de Jésus* T. I.

Prayer

O Lord, I firmly believe that for no other end Thou hast created me but Thine own greater glory. Grant me, I beseech Thee, so to faithfully accomplish all the obligations of my state, in imitation of St. Joseph, that I may give Thee honor and glory and one day be perfectly happy with Thee in heaven, singing Thy praises eternally. Amen.

Fourth Day

ST. JOSEPH ANNOUNCED IN SPECIAL PERSONAGES AND OBSERVANCES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

"Which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." (Col. II, 17.)

AS THE occurrences of the Old Testament were all ordained to the manifestation of the New Law, it should not surprise us if God also decreed that the glorious Patriarch St. Joseph should be announced in certain distinguished personages and in certain observances of the Old Law. As regards the persons whom God from time to time raised up to foreshadow some particular virtue of St. Joseph, we should first observe that as these persons bear in respect to St. Joseph the relation which a picture does to him whom it represents, we may well assume that the great Patriarch far surpasses those persons in grace and perfection in the same way that a statue excels its model, or an exemplar its copy.

It is true that these personages were destined to foreshadow, in the first place, Our Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect Man and the end of

all things. However, as God is able to embrace at a glance all things in His all-comprehensive knowledge, He likewise ordained that these same persons should, in the second place, foreshadow also the illustrious Patriarch St. Joseph. And this they did, not certainly in the imperfections which they may have had, but in those admirable virtues which distinguished them. We should admire, then, the infinite wisdom of God, who, on account of the special love which He had for St. Joseph, raised up in the Old Testament eminent personages who should symbolize the future greatness of the foster-father of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

* * *

The persons destined by God in the Old Testament to symbolize the sanctity and glory of St. Joseph were indeed many, but of these, seven may be chosen as representing in themselves with greater perfection one or other of the three theological and of the four cardinal virtues, which were possessed in their perfection by the foster-father of Jesus. These persons are: Abraham, Jacob, David, the ancient Patriarch Joseph, Noah, Job and Moses.

In Abraham, we may behold symbolized the intrepid faith of St. Joseph; in Jacob, his unshaken hope; in David, his ardent charity; in the first Joseph, his extraordinary prudence; in Noah, his perfect justice and sincere spirit of

religion; in Job, his constant patience and spirit of fortitude; in Moses, his meekness and temperance.

Worthy, indeed, of our admiration is the great Patriarch St. Joseph, who from earliest times was foreshadowed by such illustrious men because he was destined to play such an important part in the work of our Redemption.

* * *

Not only had God ordained that St. Joseph should be prefigured by some of the most eminent personages of the Old Law, but He also had decreed that the foster-father of His Son should be made known by various symbols in use in the Ancient Covenant. This He did in order to teach us how this great Saint was to be the inseparable companion of Jesus and Mary. Indeed, if we search into the mystical signification of some of the symbols of the Old Testament, we shall find in them a foreshadowing of the prerogatives of Mary and Joseph in their relation to the Word Incarnate.

In the first place, as Mary is that paradise of delights, watered by the river of grace and embellished by the tree of life which is Christ Jesus,[1] so we may perceive in the watchman divinely appointed to guard that paradise, the holy Patriarch St. Joseph, the future foster-father of Jesus and spouse of the Immaculate

[1] Gen., II, 8, foll.

Virgin.[2] Likewise, as Mary is foreshadowed in the dove which returned to the ark bearing in its beak an olive branch as a token that the universal flood had subsided,[3] so St. Joseph is prefigured in Noah, who let the dove into the ark and there took special care of it.

Further, we read that when Moses was commanded to make the propitiatory of purest gold,[4] he was likewise ordered to prepare two cherubim of glory to cover the same;[5] now, as the propitiatory was a symbol of the Saviour of the world, so were the two cherubim figures of Mary and Joseph, who were to adore continually the Host of propitiation, Jesus Christ. Finally, as Mary was to be the ark of the Testament[6] which should contain the Holy of Holies, so St. Joseph was to be that most pure veil which should hide from the eyes of unworthy men the mystery of the Incarnation.[7]

Let us give praise to God, for having delineated by sacred symbols the sweet and holy figures of Mary, the Immaculate Mother of His Son, and of St. Joseph, her most holy spouse.

[2] *Ibid.*, III, 24.
[3] *Ibid.*, VIII, 11.
[4] EX., XXV, 17; XXVI, 34.
[5] HEB., IX, 5.
[6] APOC., XI, 19.
[7] EX., XXX, 6.

Example

BLESSED HERMAN OF STEINFELD, SURNAMED JOSEPH

How dear to the heart of our blessed Lady was the choice which God made of St. Joseph for her spouse and inseparable companion on earth, can be seen from the fact that this divine Mother was once pleased to select one of her devoted servants, the Blessed Herman of Steinfeld, to symbolize in his person the high office of devotion and piety performed by the saintly Patriarch toward her. This, in fact, is what we read on this subject.

Blessed Herman lived in the thirteenth century and belonged to the Order of Premonstratensians. He had a very special devotion to the Queen of Heaven and would avail himself of every occasion of testifying his love for her. His religious brethren, in view of the frequent acts of homage which they saw him perform to the Mother of God, had given him the surname of Joseph, intending to signify thereby that they considered him a faithful copy of the holy Patriarch in his office of veneration and love toward the most Blessed Virgin. But this proceeding was an offense to Herman's humility, and he would often declare that his many defects rendered him unworthy of so high an honor. Notwithstanding this protest, his

brethren continued to call him Joseph, so that he resolved to utter a public complaint of what he considered almost a scandal. This he did in the assembled Chapter of the Community.

As this was of no use, the humble Religious prayed to God for help, when lo! there appeared to him the Blessed Virgin herself, escorted by two radiant angels. Mary then beckoned Herman to her side and declared to him her will that he should represent her holy spouse St. Joseph, whom God had given her as a faithful companion on earth, and who was now reigning with her in glory. Thus was the Blessed given to understand that as Our Lord is often pleased to make choice of some holy virgins to be His chosen spouses on earth, so Mary, in this instance, had deigned to choose him for her mystic consort.

Comforted and wonderfully consoled by this celestial vision, the devout Religious willingly acquiesced in the wishes of the Queen of Heaven, and thus was the mystery of his mystic union with her accomplished. In consequence of this event, which he made known to his superiors, Herman was henceforth called by the name of Joseph, and it is by this name that he also is known in history.

Mary appeared a second time to Blessed Herman, bearing with her the Child Jesus, whom she placed in his arms, thus making the

faithful follower of St. Joseph taste some of the delights which the saintly Patriarch enjoyed whilst on earth. Thus, as St. Joseph had often carried the Child Jesus in His infancy, so did the Blessed Herman enjoy once at least in life the high privilege of bearing the Divine Infant in his arms. And who can measure the rapturous enjoyment he drew from such close proximity to our dear Lord? The Blessed died on April 7, 1230, after a life of great holiness.[8]

Prayer

We give thanks to Thee, O Lord, for having foreshadowed Thy foster-father with such illustrious figures and symbols, and we beseech Thee, through the merits of this great Saint, to make us correspond to Thy grace, that we may reach that degree of sanctity to which Thou hast destined us.

[8] Bollandists, April 7.

Fifth Day

THE ANCIENT PATRIARCH JOSEPH, A FIGURE OF THE FOSTER-FATHER OF JESUS

"Now Israel loved Joseph above all his sons." (GEN. XXXVII, 3.)

ONE of the most touching narratives in the Old Testament is doubtless that of Joseph, the youngest but one of the sons of Jacob. When still a boy he distinguished himself by the practise of many and eminent virtues, and throughout his whole life he was an object of God's special providence, who delivered him from the evils into which fraternal envy had cast him, and bestowed upon him honor and power. Finally his father Jacob, when dying, called down upon him from Heaven the choicest blessings.

Now, it is the common teaching of sacred writers, confirmed by the authority of ecclesiastical liturgy, that this first Joseph was a figure of Mary's glorious spouse. Hence, it is both agreeable and useful for us to fix our mind upon that ancient patriarch and from what we

know of him learn the spiritual features of the foster-father of Jesus.

In the first place, Joseph, son of Jacob, was conspicuous for his stainless chastity, which made him abhor even the breath of impurity, as we learn from Holy Scripture. He was likewise illustrious for his wisdom and prudence, which he especially displayed in interpreting the dreams of Pharao, and in providing for the temporal wants of the Egyptians. Now, what can be more remarkable than the chastity of St. Joseph, who was chosen to be the guardian of the Queen of Virgins? And what more admirable than his paternal solicitude in providing for the every-day necessities of the Holy Family?

But just as the first Joseph, notwithstanding his spotless life, was the object of fierce persecution on the part of his ill-minded brethren, so also the second Joseph, together with Jesus and Mary, was exposed to bitter contradictions. True it is, that all "who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." [1]

We should render thanks to Almighty God for having given to the world, in the person of Joseph son of Jacob, so conspicuous an image of the virtues of the foster-father of Jesus, and we should entreat Him to help us to conform our lives to that of this glorious Saint.

[1] 2 Tim., iii, 12.

God never forsakes him who places entire trust in His fatherly providence. Divine Wisdom, after having led Joseph the son of Jacob through many and difficult ways, finally liberated him in a wonderful manner from the state of slavery to which the malice of men had reduced him. He set him upon a throne and gave him unlimited power over the peoples of Egypt. In a like manner God dealt with St. Joseph, the spouse of Mary. After a life of fatigue and toil, he was raised to a high degree of glory in heaven and placed upon a throne next to that of Jesus and Mary. In addition to this, he was invested with a marvelous power of distributing graces which is surpassed only by that of the Mother of God.

But how did the ancient as well as the new Joseph merit to be freed from the many evils which encompassed them on all sides? This was because of their great trust in the help of Divine Providence and their perfect conformity of heart to Its most lovable dispositions. In very deed, nothing is so acceptable to God and so liberally rewarded by Him, as a total resignation to the decrees of His most holy will and an unreserved and filial trust in His help.

Let us ask Jesus, our divine Lord and Redeemer, through the intercession of St. Joseph, the grace to abandon ourselves completely to

the sweet dispositions of Providence, in whose arms we may trustfully rest, for we know that He will always take care of us: "In peace in the selfsame I will sleep and I will rest."[2]

* * *

As Joseph the son of Jacob was a figure of Mary's holy spouse in the practise of the most wonderful virtues and in the complete abandonment of himself to the dispositions of Divine Providence, so did he also foreshadow this glorious Patriarch in those blessings which Jacob on his deathbed invoked upon him.

Jacob had always shown a preference for his son Joseph, as is seen by the tunic of various colors with which he vested him; but it was particularly when about to die that he gave utterance to expressions of special benevolence toward him. Having already blessed several of his sons, he came to Joseph and predicted that superabundant blessings should be his: first, he was to receive an abundance of beneficent rains from heaven; second, numerous founts springing from the earth were to be for his fields sources of special fertility; finally he was to have the joy of a large progeny.[3]

Indeed, all these blessings were showered upon the son of Jacob principally because of Christ, whom he was predestined to fore-

[2] Ps. IV, 9.
[3] Gen., XLIX, 25, 26.

shadow; but God, who moved Jacob's tongue in uttering those blessings, had also in view Mary's holy spouse, of whom the first Joseph was also a figure.

If, then, the manifold blessings of Jacob to his beloved son Joseph were verified in a most excellent manner in Jesus Christ, they also proved true, although in an inferior degree, in the foster-father of Our Lord. The gift of divine grace, signified by the beneficent rain from heaven, was bestowed upon him in lavish quantity. He also was enriched by a special wealth of virtue and good works, symbolized by the fountains springing from the earth. Finally, a child was given him, through the Virgin Mary, who would be the Saviour of the world. We may well admit, therefore, that the words "now Israel loved Joseph above all his sons" [4] are applicable to the foster-father of Christ no less than to the son of Jacob.

Example

GERSON, CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PARIS

One of the most illustrious clients of the foster-father of Jesus was undoubtedly the celebrated doctor John Charlier, commonly called Gerson, from the village of his birth, in the dio-

[4] GEN., XXXVII, 3.

cese of Rheims, France. Gerson was chancellor of the University of Paris and was both pious and learned. He was selected by God to promote in the Church veneration and honor to St. Joseph, and indeed he became one of the most zealous propagators of this wholesome devotion, which he strove unceasingly to instill in the hearts both of faithful and clergy by writing and by word of mouth. The authority which his position and extraordinary learning had given him contributed much to this end.

Among the works he composed in honor of St. Joseph are still preserved a Mass and an Office, the recitation of which he was wont to recommend to priests. He also wrote various panegyrics and hymns to the holy spouse of Mary, and particularly an heroic poem, entitled "Josephina," divided into twelve books. Therein he sings in affectionate verses the praises of the glorious Patriarch, the various events of his life, and the sufferings he underwent for the sake of Jesus and Mary.

He would also willingly avail himself of every suitable occasion to speak of the virtues of his great Patron. To mention one instance only, when assisting at the Council of Constance (1414-1418), he was one day called upon to give a discourse to the assembled Fathers on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin which occurred on that particular day, and on this

occasion he could not refrain from associating with Mary her chaste spouse Joseph, devoting a great portion of his sermon to celebrating his prerogatives and praises. With such unction and energy did he speak, that the Fathers of the Council were deeply moved to admiration for the piety and learning of the chancellor, whose tender love and devotion for the holy Patriarch they unanimously shared.

Nor did the zeal of this great doctor rest here. To word and speech he added action. He proposed to the Fathers of the Council that special prayers should be ordered to be said in honor of St. Joseph to obtain from God the freedom of the Church, which at that time was being cruelly persecuted. He likewise earnestly begged that a special feast be appointed to be celebrated in honor of the Saint in order that the faithful might thereby experience the benefit of his intercessory power. Passing years have proved how the zeal and wisdom of the learned prelate were well directed, and we may confidently hope that he now enjoys in heaven the fruit of his labors spent in recommending devotion to St. Joseph.

Prayer

O God, who didst so love St. Joseph as to ordain that his virtues should be foreshadowed in those of Joseph the son of Jacob, grant me so

to practise Christian virtues and especially resignation to Thy holy will, that I may deserve to receive an abundance of those blessings which Jesus Christ has brought us by His passion and death. Amen.

Sixth Day

BIRTH AND FIRST SANCTIFICATION OF ST. JOSEPH

"A little fountain grew into a very great river and abounded into many waters."

(ESTH., XI, 10.)

THE office of spouse of Mary and foster-father of Jesus, to which St. Joseph had been destined by God, is one indeed of incomparable dignity. Yet, there was nothing in the conception and birth of this holy Patriarch which distinguished him from other Hebrew children. The Blessed Virgin Mary, who had been elected by God to become the Mother of the Word Incarnate, was by a singular privilege conceived without the slightest stain of sin. St. John the Baptist, called to the office of precursor of the Divine Redeemer, was miraculously sanctified in his mother's womb. But as regards St. Joseph, there is nothing in Holy Scripture or Tradition which entitles us to hold that his conception and birth were different from those of other children of Adam. God wished that his beginnings should in all respects be like unto those of other men, though he was

to be raised in course of time to such a high degree of grace and sanctity.

Here we should admire the unsearchable ways of Divine Wisdom, which had disposed that the earthly beginnings of St. Joseph should be like those of every son of Adam, that he should receive sanctifying grace only after his birth, and that only upon arriving at the use of reason he should grow in it by his generous correspondence. Thus, also, had God decreed that the singular mission and glory of the foster-father of His Son should be fully acknowledged in the Church only in the course of ages. Truly may we here apply the saying of Holy Scripture: "Humility goeth before glory." [1]

* * *

If God did not choose to work a miracle in order to hasten the first sanctification of St. Joseph, He provided, however, that the future foster-father of His Son should be given easy access to the means appointed by Him for the purpose of enriching him with the gift of divine grace. This means was the rite of circumcision, by which the stain of original sin was remitted and grace infused into the souls of children when still destitute of the use of reason. To this humble ceremony of the Old Law, which was but a figure of Baptism, God had attached, in view of the future sufferings of Christ, the

[1] PROV., XV, 33.

power of canceling original sin and of adorning the soul with sanctifying grace, thereby liberating it from the bondage of the devil.

Wherefore, on the eighth day after his birth, the child Joseph, in accordance with the prescription of the Mosaic Law, was subjected to the painful rite of circumcision, and was thus born to the life of grace, becoming an adopted son of God. From this moment Divine Providence watched over him with a peculiar love, taking pleasure in him as in a beautiful flower whose brightness should never tarnish and whose fragrance the slightest venial sin should never disturb. The eyes of the Almighty rested upon this chosen child with inexpressible complacence. He bound it to Himself with bonds of close friendship which were never to be broken nor weakened by the least act of infidelity on the part of St. Joseph.

We are indebted to God's infinite goodness for having instituted in the New Law the sacrament of Baptism by which we are cleansed from original sin and become God's close friends, members of His Church, brothers of His only-begotten Son, and heirs of His divine promises. We must return thanks to God for having regenerated us in the salutary waters of Baptism and for having bestowed upon us His grace when as yet we did not know Him; nay, when we were His open enemies. Unlike

St. Joseph, we perhaps have not preserved unstained our wedding garment. If so, let us call upon the help of divine grace that in future we may become more watchful, avoiding all occasions of again falling not only into mortal sin, but even into any deliberate venial sin.

* * *

It is a strict obligation for every child, as soon as he attains the use of discretion and begins to understand the relation in which he stands to his Creator, to submit his mind and heart, at least in a general way, to Him, subjecting himself to the divine will and devoting his very being and life to God's service. For the worthy accomplishment of this solemn duty God does not fail to bestow His grace upon the child, and according to the way in which the child himself then corresponds with God's action is divine grace increased in its soul.

Thus, the infant Joseph, when about three or four years of age, at which time we may presume the dawn of reason broke upon him, offered himself to God with all the fervor of his heart. Moved by grace, he consecrated himself entirely to divine service, submitting to the Almighty his whole self as a perfect holocaust, and declaring himself ready to do His most holy will in all circumstances. Pleasing, indeed, was this sacrifice to the Divine Majesty. From that moment, God poured into the soul of this dear

child His choicest treasures, lavishly rewarding his generosity by surrounding him with His special assistance. If up to this time grace had been in St. Joseph's soul only as a little fountain calmly watering the faculties of his heart and mind, from that happy day forward it grew into a large and majestic river, which was destined henceforth to increase and abound in limpid and refreshing waters until it should come to be, as it were, a boundless ocean.

Example

SALVATION IN TIME OF DANGER

St. Teresa was once making a journey with some of her Sisters for the purpose of founding a new convent of reformed Carmelites in a small town of Spain. Before starting, she placed her enterprise under the protection of St. Joseph, promising him that she would dedicate the new foundation to him if he would help her to bring it to a successful issue.

Unfortunately, the coachman, unacquainted as he was with the roads of that region, lost his way and soon found that his horses had entered upon a wrong path, if indeed that is to be found in an all but trackless country. The horses hereupon became frightened and unmanageable. They ran hither and thither, rushing

now near one declivity, now near another. Suddenly, St. Teresa and her companions found themselves on the brink of a dangerous precipice.

The confidence which the Saint had in the help of the holy Patriarch urged her to break aloud in these words: "My daughters, we are lost unless St. Joseph comes to our assistance. Let us call upon his aid." Scarcely had they all done so, when a powerful voice was heard, coming as it were from the depths of an abyss and shouting out: "Stop, stop!" This voice of the unseen friend had a calming effect upon the horses. They first stopped in reality and then meekly took the way in the direction of that voice, though this seemed to be a dangerous course. Laying aside all fear and trusting in God, the travelers followed the perilous course and soon found themselves again on the right road.

Having now come safely out of danger, the coachman and the entire company sought diligently for the kind man who had rendered them such a valuable service, but they could not discover the slightest trace of him. St. Teresa said nothing, although her supernatural instinct had led her to clearly perceive the whole truth. Her heart was overfilled with gratitude, and she could find no expression for her thoughts. Her face was radiant with thankful joy.

Finally, she decided to reply to the questions of her companions, who complained of being unable to thank their benefactor. "You seek in vain, O my daughters," she said, "for him who saved you. He is none other than our own dear father, St. Joseph."

Prayer

O Lord, who didst cause the child Joseph so generously to correspond with the first impulse of grace and thus to merit to grow in the possession of this heavenly treasure, grant me always to lend an attentive ear to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, that after the example of Thy foster-father, I may always correspond with the motions of Thy grace and unceasingly grow in the love of Thee. Amen.

Seventh Day

THE CONFERRING OF THE NAME OF JOSEPH

"Joseph is a growing son, a growing son, and comely to behold." (GEN., XLIX, 22.)

IT WAS a custom among the Hebrews for parents to confer a name upon their new-born children on the eighth day after their birth; that is, on the day on which they were circumcised. In accordance with this tradition, the child that was destined to be the spouse of Mary and foster-father of Jesus, received the name of Joseph on the day on which he was circumcised. This also happened through a special design of Providence, for the name which this privileged child received on this occasion was significant of his future greatness.

In fact, the name "Joseph" in Hebrew signifies "one growing;" and, truly, no other name was more becoming to him whose life was to be a continual ascent toward the summit of sanctity. As the holy child Joseph was destined for a dignity which comes next after that of the Mother of God, so it was meet that he should make continual progress in the acquisition of

grace and in the practise of virtue. Likewise, God had decreed that, in course of time, his fame and glory should be the object of ever new and more splendid manifestations, until he should be proclaimed by the Vicar of Christ the Protector of the Universal Church.

The venerable name of Joseph had first been bestowed upon Jacob's saintly son who, from a humble shepherd boy, had been destined to become the viceroy of a large nation, passing from the dark cell of a dungeon into the superb halls of an imperial palace. With still greater propriety, was this name given to that incomparable Saint who, from a simple artisan, was by the mercy of God raised to the sublime dignity of spouse and guardian of the Queen of the world, and of tutor and defender of the Word Incarnate.

* * *

The name of Joseph is not only expressive of the singular greatness of the chaste spouse of Mary, but also, when invoked with faith and devotion together with the holy names of Jesus and Mary, it possesses a special efficacy to incite us to good and draw us away from evil.

In very truth, while this glorious name causes us to reflect on the greatness of him who bore it, it incites us at the same time to the imitation of his virtues, especially of that wonderful chastity, humility and fervor of devotion which dis-

tinguished him. Likewise, if this name be invoked with reverence, it becomes a powerful weapon of defense against the temptations of the evil one, who many times has been forced to flee on the simple perception of this name.

Wherefore, many good Christians are wont to add to the invocation of the sweet names of Jesus and Mary that of the glorious St. Joseph. They make it a point to call upon these holy names with faith and devotion, at least as often as they hear the clock strike or when awaking at night. But it is particularly at the hour of death that we should strive to invoke frequently these three holy names, that we may at that dreadful moment obtain the assistance of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Happy indeed is he who in life has acquired this laudable habit; but thrice happy is he who breathes forth his soul, uttering, if not with his lips, at least in his heart, the tender and soothing names of these three holy persons.

* * *

As the name "Joseph" is expressive of the singular greatness of the foster-father of Jesus, so also it conveys to our minds the fact that his special prerogative is that of being the Patriarch of the New Law. A patriarch is one who is the father of a son or sons, from whom a large and illustrious progeny proceeds. Now, we may say in truth that St. Joseph deserves

to be called a patriarch in the full sense of the term, having had as his foster-son Jesus, who is the Father of all the redeemed.

The ancient Fathers are called patriarchs but only imperfectly and, as it were, in figure, inasmuch as of them and their descendants Jesus Christ, the Father of all the faithful, was to be born in the course of time. But as the Old Testament is only shadow of the New, and as the reality surpasses the figure, so St. Joseph, who was foreshadowed by those ancient patriarchs of old, is called patriarch by excellence, because from his holy spouse was born the promised Messias, to whom the Father gave a progeny as vast as is the company of the elect. Wherefore, this glorious Saint is saluted by the faithful not simply as a patriarch, but as a glorious patriarch.

To him also may be applied the prophetic vision of the ancient Joseph when he saw the sun, the moon and the stars bow down to him in adoration.[1] Indeed, he was revered in this life by Jesus, the King of Glory, and by Mary, His Holy Mother; and now he receives in heaven the respectful homage of all the angels and saints.

[1] GEN., XXXVII, 19.

Example

THE VENERABLE PÈRE EYMARD

The Venerable Pierre Julien Eymard, founder of the Congregation of the Servants of the Most Blessed Sacrament, nourished a particular devotion to St. Joseph, whom he considered as the first worshiper, with Mary, of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He was glad to have an occasion of speaking of this great Saint, and in his sermons he would often extol his virtues and privileges.

He also consecrated himself to him during the spiritual exercises which he made at Rome in 1865. "Our Lord," he wrote, "has given me to-day a singular grace. He has inspired me to dedicate myself in an especial manner to St. Joseph as to my father, leader and protector. . . . He will be the spiritual director of my interior life, in order that I may lead that same life with him, hidden with Jesus and Mary and with his own self. I will imitate him especially in his silence regarding himself. . . .

"I dedicated myself to St. Joseph as to my leader and master in all my duties as superior, so that I may fulfill these duties as I should, being meek and humble of heart as he himself was, endeavoring to be meek of heart with my brethren, humble with myself, and simple before

God. I have chosen this good Saint to be my counselor and bosom friend. I have taken him for my protector in troubles and difficulties, and for the protector of my Congregation, as being the little family of Jesus. I have not asked him to free me from my crosses and trials, but only from that self-love which spoils them and turns them into arguments of vanity.

"I have prayed to Our Lord," adds the same Venerable Father, "that He might give me St. Joseph for a father, as He had given me Mary for a mother; that he might put in my heart that devotion, that confidence, that filial love of a client, of a devotee of St. Joseph. I trust the good Master has heard my prayers, for I now feel greater devotion to this great Saint, and I am full of confidence and hope."

Indeed, this servant of God always confided in the protection of St. Joseph. In all his trials, in his sorrows, in his anxiety as to the future prosperity of his Congregation, the Venerable Père Eymard never ceased to have recourse to the glorious Patriarch, bearing in his heart the assurance of always being heard by him.[2]

Prayer

O God, who didst choose St. Joseph to be the foster-father of Thy Son and didst give him

[2] Gratianopolit., seu Parisien. Beatif. et Canon. Servi Dei Petri Iuliani Eymard, Fundatoris Congregationis SS. Sacramenti, Rome, 1899, p. 203, n. 248.

a name expressive of his great destiny, engrave, I beseech Thee, that sweet name, together with the names of Jesus and Mary, upon my heart, and grant that I may breathe forth my soul pronouncing these three holy names with faith and confidence. Amen.

Eighth Day

YOUTHFUL YEARS OF ST. JOSEPH

"It is a proverb: A young man according to his way, even when he is old he will not depart from it." (PROV., XXII, 6.)

ST. JOSEPH is deservedly honored as the Patron of the spiritual and hidden life. For this reason it pleased God to keep from our knowledge the treasure of graces which he received especially during his youth, as well as the actions which he then accomplished and the merits which he acquired. We can therefore speak only in a general way of the virtues which he practised during all those years.

And first, indeed, we must admit that he possessed all the virtues in an heroic degree. We have a figure of this in the Scripture narrative concerning the ancient Joseph, who was a type of our glorious Patriarch. He had, says Holy Writ, a coat of divers colors made for him by his Father Jacob, as a sign of predilection.[1] These colors were expressive of the different virtues

[1] GEN., XXXVII, 3.

with which the soul of the future viceroy of Egypt was adorned.

Although the saintly youth Joseph possessed all the supernatural virtues, yet he excelled principally in three; namely, in prayer, in avoiding all occasions of sin, and in diligent application to work. In these three virtues, as more especially becoming his state of life, he exercised himself in a particular way. Indeed, we may gather from the Sacred Text that the ancient Joseph also, who, as we have said, was a figure of our holy Patriarch, was himself conspicuous in the practise of these three virtues during the years of his boyhood.

That Joseph the son of Jacob was given to prayer in his early years, we infer from the fact that he was then favored with communications from above. Indeed, these are wont to be the fruit of unceasing prayer and of habitual union with God. Likewise, we read that after the conception of Christ, God repeatedly manifested His will to St. Joseph by means of prophetic dreams, which is a sign that from early youth the holy Patriarch had been wont to commune with God in fervent and assiduous prayer.

Let us endeavor to imitate St. Joseph in his love of prayer, for of all occupations this is the most holy, the most meritorious, and the most advantageous to our souls.

* * *

It is an important duty for man to accustom himself to the practise of prayer from early childhood. But it is no less necessary for him to carefully preserve intact from his tenderest years the Christian virtues infused into his soul at holy Baptism. He must then learn to flee every occasion of sin, but especially of that opposed to holy purity. It is hard to conceive how many snares the devil lays in the path of guileless and incautious youths, in order to draw them into the abyss of sin, particularly through the alluring pleasures of sense. Fortunate is he who has passed through the critical years of his life remaining untainted with the filth of vice.

It was the glory of Jacob's well-beloved son to keep himself immune from the blemish of sin from earliest years. However, this great love of purity prompted him when yet a boy to denounce his brothers as guilty of a grievous fault against this holy virtue. Later, when in Putiphar's house he again succeeded in overcoming a great temptation against this holy virtue.

From the fact that God selected St. Joseph from among all to be the faithful witness and guardian of the spotless Queen of virgins, we may well infer how pure he must have been from his youth, how spotless, how careful to keep unsoiled the lily of holy purity and to flee every occasion through which its brightness

might have been tarnished. Hence he was able to say, with more truth than Sara, the daughter of Raguel: "Thou knowest, O Lord, that I have kept my soul clean from all lust."[2] O holy virtue, which renders man like to the angels, and secures for him the special benevolence of God!

* * *

If we wish efficaciously to avoid sin, and especially the baneful sin of impurity, besides prayer, watchfulness over our senses and the flight of sinful occasions, it is also necessary that we should apply ourselves to some useful work such as our state of life requires. The law of labor is of divine origin, and we know, moreover, that "idleness hath taught much evil."[3] In vain does he hope to keep himself chaste, who shrinks from work and passes his days in idle conversation or vain amusements.

Regarding the ancient Joseph, Holy Scripture expressly mentions the fact that, from his earliest years, he, together with his brothers, herded Jacob's sheep. Likewise, we know that Mary's holy spouse passed his youthful days in the humble workshop of a carpenter. There he learned the trade which he was to pursue during life and by which he would one day procure for the Holy Family its daily sustenance.

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[2] Tob., III, 16.
[3] Ecclus., XXXIII, 29.

A life employed in holy and useful occupation is indeed pleasing to God. A good Christian ought often to call to mind the advice of the Holy Ghost: "Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly." [4] Continued occupation in the fulfilment of one's own duties, fervent prayer, great vigilance over the senses, immediate flight of the occasions of sin: these are the essential conditions for leading a holy and pure life and progressing daily in grace and sanctity.

Example

ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE

St. Joseph is a perfect model of stainless purity. To him, therefore, was given the care of Jesus the King of purity, and of Mary the Virgin of virgins. It is not to be wondered at, then, that he has been universally chosen as the protector of youth. Christian parents and masters who desire to impart to the young a true Christian training, feel themselves instinctively drawn to place their efforts under the patronage of this great Saint and to propose him as a model to their sons or pupils, for it is particularly in the time of youth that the demon of impurity wages a war to the death against the holy virtue.

[4] Eccles., ix, 10.

St. John Baptist de la Salle, the Founder of the great teaching Congregation of the Christian Brothers, acted on this principle when he placed his Institute under the protection of St. Joseph. He had already declared the Blessed Virgin to be the Patroness of his Congregation; but he wished the youths confided to his care to be placed also under the special fatherly protection of St. Joseph. Therefore, he would often recommend his companions to have trustful recourse to the holy Patriarch, that so they might obtain for themselves that spirit of loving and firm watchfulness, by which they might safely lead their pupils in the path of virtue.

What struck the holy Founder most in the life of the spouse of Mary was his perfect submission to the dispositions of Divine Providence, his resignation to God's will in the most difficult moments, his prompt obedience to the voice of God, his angelic chastity, his hidden life and especially his love for Jesus and Mary. Such was the reverence which he had for this great Saint, that he composed a special litany in his honor, choosing from Holy Scripture such invocations as best express the sentiments of love and respect which he had for the holy Patriarch.

There is a particular event in the life of St. John Baptist de la Salle which shows his unbounded devotion to the saintly spouse of Mary.

He was once confined to his bed for some time and could not celebrate holy Mass. When the vigil of the feast of St. Joseph arrived, he said to the Brother infirmarian: "What joy would it not be for me, if I could say Mass to-morrow and distribute the Bread of Angels to the Community, and if, kneeling before the statue of our Patron, we could consecrate ourselves to him together!" His wish was answered. In fact, that same night, to the surprise of all, he was freed from his pains, and gradually felt his strength returning.

On the following day he was able to rise and celebrate the unbloody Sacrifice, which he did in honor of the chaste spouse of Mary. That was his last Mass, and we may well imagine with what fervor and gratitude he celebrated it. This fact greatly contributed to augment in him and in his companions devotion to the Patron of the Institute. Being near his death, he did not fail to exhort his sons to love and reverence with true piety the glorious spouse of Mary and foster-father of Jesus and to strive earnestly to imitate his virtues.[5]

Prayer

O Lord, who caused the holy child Joseph, whilst busy in the humble workshop at Naza-

[5] *Vita di S. Giov. Battista de la Salle*, pp. 305, 416. Roma, 1900.

reth, to grow daily in sanctity and virtue before God and men, grant that through his intercession, I too, by avoiding all loss of time, by fleeing every occasion of sin, by devoting myself to prayer and the daily fulfilment of my duties, may continually grow in the possession of Thy divine grace. Amen.

Ninth Day

ST. JOSEPH CHOSEN BY GOD TO BE THE SPOUSE OF MARY

"Happy is the husband of a good wife."
(Ecclus., xxvi, 1.)

ST. JOSEPH, having been predestined from all eternity to be the spouse of the Mother of God, it was necessary that when the appointed time had come for the accomplishment of this mystery, he should actually be selected from among all his contemporaries for this great dignity. Now, how was this event to be brought about? Some writers have thought that God manifested His will by a special revelation. Others adhere to a simple and pious legend, according to which the staff of St. Joseph would have been seen covered with fresh flowers in preference to that of the various suitors for the Virgin's hand, and this would have been the sign of his being divinely elected to be Mary's husband. But neither of these opinions has any ground in Holy Scripture or support in Tradition, and they cannot, therefore, be relied upon.

The means chosen by God to bring about

the election of St. Joseph to the dignity of spouse of Mary was that very law made in the early days of Israel, regulating the contracting of marriage among the children of the Jews. It was in accordance with this law that the fortunate youth was chosen who was destined to be Mary's spouse. The Hebrew regulation required that a maiden who was an only child and, consequently, heiress to her parents' goods, should marry none other than one of her own family and tribe. Mary, indeed, was an only child, and both she and Joseph belonged to the same family. This was the reason why St. Joseph was selected to be the husband of the future Mother of Jesus.

We cannot sufficiently admire the wonderful wisdom of God, who often brings about the accomplishment of His high designs through ordinary and quite common circumstances. Men often see in the events of life nothing but natural occurrences; but in reality these serve to execute a plan prepared from all eternity by Him who foresees all things and ordains them for His all-wise designs.

* * *

The fact that St. Joseph was chosen to be the spouse of Mary by reason of his kinship with her, is no reason why we should underrate the honor which accrues to him from this choice. Indeed, by his spotless life, the holy

Patriarch merited so singular a grace, and the disposition of the Mosaic law to which we refer was but the means ordained by God for him to receive that great honor.

In fact, St. Joseph surpassed in sanctity and purity of life all his contemporaries, no matter how holy they may have been. Nay, God had so disposed that the merits of St. Joseph should be in exact proportion with the dignity to which he was destined. On the other hand, this same dignity was for him an efficacious means by which he might make daily progress in virtue and finally attain to that degree of glory in heaven which God had prepared for him from all eternity.

Thus, all the virtuous deeds which St. Joseph performed before his marriage with our blessed Lady were, under the influence of grace, as so many touches of the divine artist's pencil, which embellished his soul and rendered him worthy of his high office. The incomparable dignity of spouse of Mary demanded to be coupled with a peerless sanctity, and this same sanctity, as actually found in our glorious Patriarch, made him worthy to be chosen in preference to all other young men as the husband of the Blessed Virgin, herself the most accomplished type of all purity and holiness after Jesus Christ, her Son.

Let us return thanks to the Most High for

the lofty office He bestowed upon St. Joseph. Let us also learn from this great Saint ever to live and act in accordance with the standard of Christian perfection to which we pledged ourselves in holy Baptism, so that by the grace of God, we may ever grow in charity and finally arrive at eternal life.

* * *

Divine Wisdom, which ordains and governs all things with sweet harmony, chose for Mary a spouse worthy of her in the person of St. Joseph. The first requisite for a happy union in the bonds of marriage is similarity of character, habits and virtues, between the contracting parties. If this be true, no other young man was more fit to be Mary's spouse than St. Joseph, as he resembled her more than any one else. A polished mirror receives and faithfully reflects the rays of the sun: so it seemed as if St. Joseph had received in himself a reflection of sanctity from the Mother of God, so like were his own virtues to those of Mary Immaculate.

We do not mean to assert that St. Joseph's sanctity was measured up to that of Mary's, for the Mother of God is superior both in dignity and grace to any other saint or angel. But we affirm that Mary's spouse resembled her more closely than any rational creature ever did. The union between Mary and Joseph was a singular union, most blissful and intimate; it

was based upon a perfect similarity of aspiration, affection and virtue.

Let us thank and praise our good Lord, who chose for His holy Mother a companion and helper so perfectly resembling her. Let us also beg of Him assistance all the days of our life, that we may ever increase in His holy love, and that our souls may become more and more worthy of their heavenly spouse.

Example

BLESSED MADALEINE SOFIE BARAT

This illustrious servant of God, whose virtues shone forth during the greater part of the last century, and who was lately raised to the honors of the altar by Pope Pius X, had a tender devotion to the glorious St. Joseph. We quote the following from a letter written by her to the Sisters of her Congregation: "From the beginning, our Institute has had it at heart to propagate devotion to St. Joseph, whom we consider as our guardian and protector. Hence, we should offer on every Wednesday special homage and prayers to him, and keep his feast in a solemn manner. Many of our houses have already chosen him as their patron, and he has shown us constant signs of paternal benevolence."

This saintly woman would often speak with earnest warmth of the rare prerogatives of the holy Patriarch; she would exalt his dignity hidden under humble appearances; she would praise his sanctity, which was proportioned to his high mission; she would set forth his unique privilege to have been chosen by God to be the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary; and, lastly, she would recall the great power of intercession which he now enjoys in heaven.

"The two greatest personages who ever lived on this earth," she would say, "subjected themselves to him. Jesus wished to become indebted to St. Joseph for the necessaries of life, and of this holy Patriarch alone it may be said that he saved the life of his Saviour. Let us love Jesus above all; let us love Mary as our Mother; but, then, how could we keep from loving Joseph, who was so intimately united to both Jesus and Mary? And how can we honor him better than by imitating his virtues? Now, what else did he do in all his life but contemplate, study and adore Jesus, even in the midst of his daily labors? Behold, therefore, our model."

Full of confidence in such a protector, Mother Barat would exhort her Sisters to petition him in this wise: "Deign to reveal to me, O glorious Saint, the spiritual wealth hidden in a poor and humble life such as thy own life was; obtain for me the interior spirit; vouchsafe to instruct

me that I may by thy guidance attain a perfect dependence of myself on the will of God. Enfold always in the mantle of thy paternal benevolence our society, as thou didst thine own family." Never did Blessed Madaleine Barat retire to rest at night before she had devoutly kissed an image of St. Joseph and offered up a fervent prayer to him.[1]

Prayer

O Lord, who didst call the glorious St. Joseph to a state of so great sanctity in order that he might be the worthy spouse of Mary most holy, grant that I may avoid every occasion of sin and so exercise myself in the practise of virtue that I may become worthy of my high calling as a Christian, with which Thy infinite mercy has been pleased to favor me. Amen.

[1] *Vita della Beata Maddalena Sofia Barat*, pp. 617, 618, Florence, 1908.

Tenth Day

THE HOLY MARRIAGE OF ST. JOSEPH WITH THE BLESSED VIRGIN

"When His Mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child, of the Holy Ghost."

(MATT., I, 18.)

IT IS a point of Catholic teaching that the Mother of God was united to St. Joseph by the bonds of true marriage. This, however, happened without the flower of virginity, which these holy persons had vowed to God, being in the least sullied. It is for us a pleasing and at the same time most useful occupation to pause and consider the reason why God ordained that this saintly union, which was not absolutely necessary for the mystery of the Incarnation, should have taken place.

The first reason was because God wished that the virginal birth of Jesus Christ should be hidden from the eyes of the Jews, who, incapable of understanding so extraordinary an occurrence, would have seized the opportunity to

calumniate Our Lord had they not known that Mary was the lawful spouse of Joseph.

Furthermore, the wondrous birth of the Saviour had to be concealed from the devil, who otherwise would have incited the Jews to put Him to death before the time appointed by God had arrived. To understand this, we must remember that as the devil did not possess the supernatural gift of faith, he could never come to know the divinity of Christ with absolute certainty. But in course of time, that is, when he saw the wonderful works of Jesus, he came to the conclusion that Jesus must be more than an ordinary man, a kind of prophet, who would eventually establish the kingdom of God upon earth.

Now, had the virginal birth of Jesus Christ been made known to the devil, he might have come to this knowledge from the beginning, and so he might have vented his fury on Jesus, causing Him to be put to death before He could accomplish the work of our Redemption. Therefore, in order that the enemy of mankind might not make void the designs of Providence respecting our salvation, Almighty God in His infinite wisdom decreed that Jesus should be born of a Virgin united to St. Joseph by the bonds of true marriage. So, the presence of the saintly Patriarch was, in the Holy Family,

as a veil which covered the mystery of the virginal birth of the Saviour.

* * *

God disposed that St. Joseph should be united to Mary in marriage not only that the holy Patriarch might hold toward Jesus the office of father, but also that he might accomplish all the duties of a faithful spouse toward the Mother of His Son.

Mary, as Mother of the Word Incarnate and companion with Him in the great sacrifice, was destined to share His sufferings, to follow Him into exile, to provide for His sustenance, and to jealously shield Him from the hands of those who sought to kill Him. Therefore, it was just that she should have been given a faithful companion who would provide for her daily needs, protect her in the midst of the dangers of life, and with his affectionate conversations and sweet presence lighten her troubles.

For this end, by reason of that holy marriage, Joseph became Our Lady's faithful guardian and the true witness of her virginity; he was her comfort in trials, her support in adversity and her inseparable companion in her great mission as co-Redemptress of the human race.

But since the natural law would have spouses resemble each other in gifts of mind and heart as far as possible, we may infer from this how great must have been the perfection of the

Patriarch St. Joseph. He was, in fact, a most perfect copy of Mary, whom he resembled more than any other creature.

* * *

The mystery of the union of the Mother of God with St. Joseph should remind persons living in the state of matrimony of the reverence, love and assistance they owe each other. But it also teaches us how pleasing in the eyes of Jesus is this virtue of holy virginity, which He wished to be practised perfectly here on earth by His holy parents. And this is indeed a seasonable lesson, as in the present times men seem entirely given up to the depraved pleasures of sense. The world knows not how to attend to the things of God, nor can it understand what sweetness and peace flood the soul that seeks God only. Faith alone teaches us what merit can be gained for heaven by the practise of perfect virginity united to the duties of the married state.

Oh, how beautiful is the chaste and virtuous union of those persons whose conversations are "according to the will of God" [1] and whose actions all tend to their mutual edification! They are as most sweet fruits which strengthen the soul on its long and arduous journey from the exile of this life to its native country.

[1] I Peter, iv, 11.

Example

ST. BRIDGET OF SWEDEN

Devotion to St. Joseph, besides being a source of blessing to individuals, is also a pledge of heavenly graces and spiritual favors to Christian families. Happy those families in which that spirit of piety, peace and concord which breathed through the holy house of Nazareth reigns supreme!

One such family was precisely that of St. Bridget of Sweden, who, espoused to Ulfone, prince of Nericia, was blessed with eight children, all worthy of their saintly mother. Among these, one named Catherine shone with special luster. After having edified the world by her remarkable virtues, she had the consolation of seeing her request for the canonization of her mother crowned with success. In fact, it was recognized that St. Bridget had practised during her lifetime the virtues of humility and self-denial to so high a degree of heroism, and had persevered with such constancy in the spirit of prayer, that she merited to be raised to the honors of the altar soon after her death.

Now, if St. Bridget obtained such consoling fruits, this certainly was due, among other causes, to the patronage of St. Joseph, concerning whose virtues and greatness she merited to

be especially instructed by the Mother of God herself. In fact, the Blessed Virgin on one occasion thus addressed her:[2] "St. Joseph was so reserved and careful in his speech, that not one word ever issued from his mouth that was not good and holy, nor did he ever indulge in unnecessary or less charitable conversation. He was most patient and diligent in bearing fatigue; he practised extreme poverty; he was most meek in bearing injuries; he was strong and constant against my enemies; he was the faithful witness of the wonders of Heaven, being dead to the flesh and the world, living only for God and for heavenly goods, which were the only things he desired. He was perfectly conformed to the divine will and so resigned to the dispositions of Heaven, that he ever repeated: May the will of God ever be done in me. He rarely spoke with men, but continually with God, whose will he desired to perform. Wherefore, he now enjoys great glory in heaven."

On another occasion, the most holy Virgin, speaking with St. Bridget regarding her spouse Joseph, said that she exhorted her to imitate the many examples of virtues which this saintly Patriarch has left us. It is not to be wondered at if the Saint, following this advice given her by the Mother of God, rose in a short time to a great height of sanctity.

[2] *Revelations*, I, IV, Chapter 50.

Prayer

I thank Thee, O most sweet Lord, for having through the marriage of Mary and Joseph, provided with so much wisdom for the honor of Thy Son made Man and of His most holy Mother. And since this glorious Patriarch corresponded so perfectly with his high calling as to become the protector of the Holy Family on earth, grant that the holy Catholic Church, the one great Christian family, may ever enjoy the beneficial effects of the protection of this glorious patron. Amen.

Eleventh Day

PERPETUAL VIRGINITY OF ST. JOSEPH

"O, how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory, for the memory thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men." (Wis., iv, 1.)

ONE of the most glorious prerogatives of St. Joseph, and certainly one most dear to the Christian heart, is that of his perpetual virginity. This truth, although not contained in Holy Scripture, is deeply rooted in the minds of the faithful. The denial of it could only proceed from such as have lost the sense of Christ, and certainly could not be uttered without causing grave scandal.

That the glorious spouse of Mary and foster-father of Jesus Christ should always have remained a virgin, seems an almost necessary consequence of his dignity and of his office. How can we suppose that our Saviour, who wished to be born of a virgin mother, and who loves to feed among the lilies,[1] should have consented to have as His foster-father one deprived of the

[1] Cant., ii, 16.

beautiful crown of perfect chastity and whose love would have been divided among creatures? How can we admit that Divine Providence should have given to her who is the Virgin of virgins a guardian and companion lacking the fragrant virtue of unsullied purity? How can we conceive St. Joseph himself divided in his affection for Mary? We know that Almighty God desires His ministers to lead a celibate life because of the holiness of their office. How much more, then, ought we to hold that it was His will that the Saint whom He had chosen to be the head and guardian of the Holy Family, should live in perpetual virginity?

We may firmly believe that this virtue rendered St. Joseph so like to Jesus, his foster Son, and to Mary, his most pure spouse. It is most dear to the heart of God and at the same time most pleasing to men. Such as wish to walk in the footsteps of the Lamb should endeavor to practise carefully this holy virtue.

* * *

Not only did St. Joseph keep himself free from all enticement of flesh and blood throughout his life, but he wished, moreover, to consecrate the flower of his virginity to God by vow, which he did being yet a youth. To Mary, the Mother of God, belongs the very first place in this matter, for she was the first person who ever made to God the vow of perpetual vir-

ginity. St. Joseph comes next, having by divine inspiration followed in the footsteps of Mary. Thus, when these holy spouses came to be united in the bonds of matrimony, both had already pledged themselves by vow to observe forever perfect chastity.

We should remember what a vow is and how pleasing an offering it is in the sight of God. A vow is a promise made to Almighty God of a thing possible and better than its opposite; and, so, it is an act pertaining to the virtue of religion, having for its object to promote the divine honor and worship. As an offering, a vow is most pleasing to God, since by it man not only consecrates to Him the act of the proposed virtue, but he also adds thereto the firm purpose of always acting in conformity with that virtue to the greater glory of his Maker.

Thus, then, did St. Joseph promise to God, by the vow of perpetual virginity, to abstain from every pleasure of sense, by renouncing entirely for the whole course of his life any act which could offend, were it but momentarily, the delicate and sweet-scented virtue of chastity. How pleasing this offering was in the eyes of the Almighty and with what complacency Jesus and Mary looked upon him who had thus renounced every earthly enjoyment to give pleasure to God alone!

* * *

From the fact that Our Lord wished His holy Mother and His foster-father St. Joseph to practise perfect and perpetual chastity, we can deduce how dear to His Heart is this elect virtue which renders man similar to the angels, brings him nearer to God, and makes him capable of contemplating things celestial and of exercising acts of heroic charity toward his neighbor. "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory, for the memory thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men. When it is present, they imitate it: and they desire it when it hath withdrawn itself. And it triumpheth crowned forever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts." [2]

It is the singular glory of the Catholic Church to have numbered at all times among her children, persons who made profession of perfect continence. The examples of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, which are continually held before our minds by the teaching of the Church, are a constant reminder of, and a powerful incentive to, the practise of perfect chastity. How glorious is the band of such heroes of both sexes who, renouncing the pleasures of the senses, make it their special object to preserve unspotted the holy lily of chastity! These, saith the Lord, "I will bring into My holy mount and will make them joyful in My house of prayer.

[2] WIS., IV, 1, 2.

Their holocausts and their victims shall please Me upon My altar." [3]

Example

Origin and Object of the Cincture of St. Joseph

In the year 1657 there lived in Antwerp an Augustinian nun of conspicuous sanctity named Elizabeth. For a long time she had been afflicted with very severe pains and such was her condition that physicians declared death not only inevitable, but also imminent. Finding herself beyond all human aid, the devout Religious thought of having recourse to St. Joseph, in whose protection she had a very special confidence. She had a cord blessed in his honor which she wore about her, asking the Saint to come to her assistance. Some days later, while absorbed in profound prayer, she felt herself suddenly and completely restored to health, so that the doctor who attended her, though a Protestant, was forced to admit her cure to be miraculous.[4]

This miracle having been made known in different places, many persons who were afflicted with serious ailments, trusting in the assistance of this great Patriarch, procured for themselves

[3] Is., LVI, 7.
[4] Bollandists, *Acta S. Josephi*, 19 Mart. Page 109.

cords similar to the one worn by the nun of Antwerp and, wonderful to say, they likewise experienced great relief. At the same time several pious priests conceived the idea that the cincture might serve not only as a means for obtaining bodily favors, but that it might also be a symbol and a remembrance of the excellence of the virtue of chastity practised by the holy Patriarch. This pious object would stimulate the faithful to ask of God, through the mediation of St. Joseph, a complete victory over the flesh. Thus was the Confraternity of the Cincture of St. Joseph first established in the Church of St. Nicholas at Verona, whence it finally spread all over the world. The Sovereign Pontiffs have enriched this pious Confraternity with copious indulgences. The seat of it is now in the Church of St. Rocco at Rome.

The Cincture of St. Joseph should be made of cotton, wool or linen, and should be worn under the clothing. It is both a symbol and a prayer: a symbol of interior devotion to the glorious Patriarch; a prayer to obtain, through his powerful intercession, the virtue of holy purity. But since sorrows as well as joys are usually common property among friends, the Cincture has been made also to serve as a reminder of the seven joys and seven sorrows of St. Joseph. For this effect it contains seven distinct knots, and these while recalling to the

mind of the devout clients of St. Joseph the sorrows and joys of this great Patriarch, are also a means for the faithful to sanctify their own sorrows and joys in union with those of the holy spouse of Mary.

Prayer

O most chaste St. Joseph, who being chosen by God to be the faithful guardian of the Incarnate Word and of the Queen of virgins, didst ever preserve unspotted the lily of holy purity; extend thy fatherly care over the clergy, who are the elect portion of holy Church, and through thy powerful intercession, obtain for all its members the grace of remaining unharmed in the midst of the corruptions of a deceitful world. Amen.

Twelfth Day

ST. JOSEPH ACCOMPANIES MARY INTO JUDEA

"A faithful friend is a strong defense; and he that hath found him, hath found a treasure. Nothing can be compared to a faithful friend."
(ECCLUS., VI, 14, 15.)

THE humble Virgin of Nazareth having been made aware by angelic revelation of the miraculous fecundity of St. Elizabeth, determined to set out to visit her. This she did, moved as she was by a sense of fervent charity, in the hope of being of some comfort and assistance to her cousin. But Mary did not travel alone. She was, as writers generally tell us, accompanied on this journey by her chaste spouse, St. Joseph.

The evangelists, whose purpose was to narrate those things only which pertain directly to the Incarnation of Christ, are silent on this point, which indeed has no direct bearing on this great mystery. However, from the expression which St. Matthew uses, when calling St. Joseph the husband of Mary,[1] we may readily

[1] MATT., I., 19.

conclude that the Holy Patriarch did accompany his spouse on her journey to Judea. If, in fact, St. Joseph is called in Holy Writ a just man; if he was given to Mary purposely that he might be an inseparable companion to her, that he might guard her in time of danger and console her in adversity, how can we suppose that he should have deserted his youthful spouse at a time when she had special need of his presence and help? Rather, we may believe that the same tender spirit of charity which incited Mary to hasten without delay to the hillside country to succor her cousin Elizabeth, also moved St. Joseph to accompany his well-beloved spouse and share with her the inconveniences of a long and painful journey.

Blessed art thou, O glorious St. Joseph, because of the charity shown by thee to thy beloved spouse. Thy presence during that journey caused her more joy and comfort than the length of the way inflicted discomfort and fatigue upon her.

* * *

The journey from Galilee to Judea was a long and painful one for the holy couple. It required no less than ten days to cover on foot the hundred miles which separate Nazareth from the village of Elizabeth, now called Ain-Karem, or St. John on the Mountains. The way lay over hills and through valleys, and often was but a

by-path, rendered almost impracticable by reason of the inclement weather. Love, however, feels no fatigue. Thus, the companionship of these two loving souls, in whom reigned the spirit of God, made every inconvenience bearable; nay, even pleasing. What wonder, then, if Joseph and Mary did not feel the weariness of the long journey, and arrived at the home of Elizabeth even more disposed and inclined to works of charity than when they set out? For on the way they edified each other with mutual prayer and pious discourses, recalling to mind the prophecies relating to the coming of the Redeemer.

Having arrived at the home of Elizabeth, Mary was saluted by her cousin as blessed among women, for bearing in her womb the Saviour, blessed above all the sons of men. To this salutation Mary replied with that wonderful canticle, the Magnificat, which has been, and ever will be, the admiration of subsequent ages.

St. Joseph was as yet unaware of the mystery which had occurred in Mary's womb through the operation of the Holy Ghost. He could not then fully understand the high significance of Elizabeth's salutation nor of Mary's answer. However, he seized the opportunity of admiring still further the work of divine grace in his spouse. He anxiously looked forward to the

moment when God would be pleased to grant him a fuller revelation of His secret designs on Mary. Hence, we may say of him what the Scripture says of the Mother of God when she heard the words of Jesus; namely, St. Joseph also "kept all these words, pondering them in his heart." [2]

* * *

Next to the virtue of charity, by which we love God above all things for His own sake, nothing is more pleasing to our divine Master nor fraught with greater graces for our souls than a lively compassion for the wants and miseries of our neighbor. This compassion prompts us to offer our services freely to our brethren in Christ and to refuse them no help or comfort because of fatigue or pain on our part. In this matter we should again imitate St. Joseph; we should hasten with alacrity and generosity to the assistance of our neighbor and exercise in his behalf the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

To the practise of charity we should unite a spirit of meditation and affectionate reflection upon the works of God. And whilst admiring the grandeur of these works, we should also petition the Giver of all graces that we too may be led in the way of His divine commandments. "Lead me into the path of Thy com-

[2] LUKE, II, 19.

mandments, for this same have I desired."[3] This petition should be humble, fervent and persevering, as was St. Joseph's petition.

Example

ST. FRANCIS OF SALES

St. Francis of Sales, the great missionary bishop who brought so many heretics back to the true fold of Christ, may be said to have been a perfect model of devotion to the chaste spouse of Mary. He honored him with signs of the highest veneration, and to no other saint, after the Mother of God, did he show greater love and reverence than to St. Joseph. Thus the one holy picture card he always kept in his Breviary was that of the holy Patriarch, which he beheld frequently whilst reciting his Office. To Mary and Joseph he dedicated the admirable treatise which he wrote on the love of God.

Not content with being himself a devout client of the holy Patriarch, St. Francis of Sales sought to propagate among the faithful this wholesome devotion. He often treats of the virtues and greatness of the foster-father of Jesus in his works on the spiritual life. On the vigil of his feast he fasted on bread and water, and on the day of the feast he celebrated

[3] Ps., CXVIII, 35.

solemn Mass in the morning and recited the praises of the Saint in the evening.

One day while at Lyons he was invited to preach twice on St. Joseph on the same day. He accepted the task with his usual affability, remarking that rarely had it been his duty to preach twice in a day; however, out of love for St. Joseph, he would willingly do it that time. He was wont to say: "No image can be sweeter to my heart than that of Jesus being carried in the arms of the chaste spouse of Mary and calling him father a thousand times in infantile language such as is prompted by the tender heart of a son." No wonder, therefore, that he spoke on this occasion with such eloquence and unction about the virtues and glories of St. Joseph as to charm all who heard him, among whom was the Cardinal of Macquemont!

Among the writings of St. Francis of Sales there is one, the nineteenth spiritual conference, in which he treats of the virtues of the holy Patriarch, defending his perpetual virginity and calling him the just man, because of the all-embracing perfection which distinguished him from among all other saints. St. Francis also upholds the opinion that the foster-father of Jesus was bodily assumed into heaven, and expatiates upon his powerful intercession, through which, he was wont to say, we may obtain all graces from God.

The confidence which St. Francis of Sales had in the intercession of St. Joseph led him naturally to wish that the Order of the Visitation founded by him should practise a special devotion to this glorious Patriarch. His desire was fulfilled. The members of that Congregation placed themselves under the care and protection of St. Joseph and dedicated to his honor the first church which they built, at Annecy.

The holy Bishop used to recommend the novices to take St. Joseph as their master, guide and director in the exercises of the interior life. For this reason the nuns of the Visitation, inheriting the spirit of their holy Founder, ever showed themselves devoted clients of the virginal spouse of Mary Immaculate. Finally, during the year which preceded his death, St. Francis was greatly consoled by hearing that the feast of the holy Patriarch had been proclaimed a holyday of obligation by the then reigning Sovereign Pontiff, Gregory XV.[4]

Prayer

Faithful spouse and guardian of Mary, St. Joseph, who with loving care and solicitude accompanied the holy Virgin into Judea, assisting her and diminishing as much as possible for her the fatigue of that long journey, obtain

[4] *Histoire du B. François de Sales, par son Nepveu.* Paris, 1857. Année de la Visitation p. 154. Lettre CXXXIX.

for me from God that spirit of lively charity, which will prompt me to lovingly succor my neighbor in his pains and afflictions and assist him in the difficulties of life. Amen.

Thirteenth Day

THE ANGUISH OF ST. JOSEPH AT MARY'S PREGNANCY

"Whereupon Joseph, her husband, being a just man and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately . . . Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife." (MATT., I, 19-20.)

THE life of man upon earth is but a succession of pains and afflictions. Suffering is not infrequently in proportion with sanctity, God having decreed that His elect should be purified in the crucible of sorrow. Sorrow and tribulation purify the just man's soul and make him ascend ever higher in sanctity. Thus it was with St. Joseph. He had been destined by God to a high degree of grace; hence, he also had to pass through many trials and hardships.

After having accompanied Mary on her visit to St. Elizabeth, the holy Patriarch returned to Nazareth. His mind was still filled with the recollection of the wonderful events that had occurred at the home of Zachary, and more espe-

cially of the words of praise which St. John's mother had directed to his holy spouse. Suddenly a sharp sword of sorrow pierced his holy and sensitive soul. Mary, whose sanctity he had so much admired and reverenced, showed signs of pregnancy. Being as yet ignorant of the fact of the Incarnation of the Word due to the operation of the Holy Ghost, St. Joseph was at a loss to account for the present condition of his spouse. Hence his soul was, as it were, tossed about by conflicting thoughts and emotions, even as a frail craft upon a tempestuous sea. Could it be possible that Mary had been faithless to her virginal vows? Could it be that she, who seemed so pure, so holy, should have broken her faith to God, to himself? St. Joseph could not induce himself to accept so cruel a possibility, and yet the fact of Mary's pregnancy was but too evident.

O Lord, why didst Thou permit such grief to flood the soul of Thy faithful servant, if not because of the great law that all such as please God have to pass through many tribulations, remaining faithful.[1]

* * *

The source of St. Joseph's anguish lay principally in the conflict between his conscience and the prescription of the law. The law of Moses forbade a man to retain an adulterous

[1] JUDITH, VIII, 23.

wife. On the other hand, St. Joseph could not induce himself to believe that Mary, whose holiness he well knew, had been guilty of so horrible a sin. Hence he determined not to denounce her publicly, resolving at the same time to send her away privately. In this St. Joseph showed himself a zealous observer of the law, and a loving husband, jealous for the honor of his spouse.

The behavior of St. Joseph in this instance might well be held up to our imitation. He refrained not only from rashly judging Mary, but also from suspecting her of evil. He suspended his judgment, waiting patiently till it should please Almighty God to dispel the clouds which had gathered round the honor of his spouse.

Would to God that we also might pursue a similar course toward our neighbor, abstaining from suspecting evil of him as long as proof is wanting. A mere suspicion, when devoid of objective ground, is nothing else than an unjustified evil opinion of our neighbor and as such, cannot be free from sin. Justice demands that whenever we have a doubt concerning our neighbor's moral state, we should suspend our judgment, and rather try to solve the doubt in his favor; for every man has a right to our esteem until his fall is proven. On the other hand, it is a lesser fault to have a good opinion

of a bad man, than to have a bad opinion of a good man. "If I believe that thou art good, what shall I lose thereby?" asks St. Augustine.[2]

* * *

To those in tribulation St. James recommends prayer: "Is any of you sad? Let him pray."[3] St. Joseph in the midst of his anxiety caused by the sight of the pregnancy of Mary had nothing more at heart than recourse to prayer. Who can tell with what ardent petitions he supplicated the Almighty to relieve him of his affliction or else to grant him light and strength to bear it in patient silence?

God, who always consoles the humble,[4] who is ever more prompt to hear us than we are to supplicate Him, did not permit the holy Patriarch to remain long oppressed by his sorrow. He sent an angel to him in sleep, with a message to enlighten him concerning the fulfilment of the mystery of the Incarnation, and dispelling his fear with regard to the sanctity of his spouse.

What heavenly joy, what an ocean of contentment filled the tender soul of the holy Patriarch when he received the angel's message! Truly were the words of the prophet fulfilled in him then: "For wrath is in his indignation, and life in his good will. In the evening, weep-

[2] *Enarrat. in Ps.* CXLVII, n. 16.
[3] JAS., V, 13.
[4] 2 COR., VII, 6.

ing shall have place; and in the morning, gladness.'' [5]

Example

SPECIAL EFFICACY OF THE DEVOTION TO THE SEVEN JOYS AND SEVEN SORROWS OF ST. JOSEPH

A good friend not only partakes of the joys of his friend, but shares his grief also in the day of adversity. For this reason did God complain bitterly, through Amos the prophet, of the proud Hebrews of old who, living in luxury and grown arrogant, did not show any compassion for the affliction of the ancient patriarch Joseph, who was sold by his brethren into captivity, nor for that of his descendants.[6]

All those who truly revere the holy Patriarch St. Joseph love to recall with tender compassion the sorrows which he endured during his lifetime. To this end a pious practise has been instituted which is called the devotion to the Seven Joys and Seven Sorrows of St. Joseph. This pious practise makes us partake in some way both in the joys and the afflictions of the holy Patriarch, and is an efficacious means of obtaining from him any favor we may desire, as is shown by the following instance attested

[5] Ps., xxix, 6.
[6] Amos, vi, 6.

by many authorities, among whom is Giovanni de Fano.

More than three hundred persons were once sailing on the North Sea. For a time the voyage proved favorable, but suddenly a violent storm arose. The small sea-going craft was lashed by the furious waves and finally beaten to pieces. All aboard were drowned, save two Franciscan friars, who were devoted to St. Joseph. These had clung to a large board and for three days battled with the waves. Hope of life and fear of death alternated in their souls. At last, full of confidence in their beloved patron St. Joseph, they recommended themselves to his protection, when, behold! on the third day a venerable old man came toward them on the waves. He guided the board to which they were clinging and brought them safely to land. It was but natural for the two Religious to ask whom they had to thank for such an unexpected rescue. One may well imagine what their surprise was when they found out that their savior was none other than St. Joseph, to whom they had recommended themselves!

The holy Patriarch then exhorted them to persevere in their devotion to himself. He added that if they wished to make themselves pleasing to him they should daily recite seven Our Fathers and seven Hail Marys in memory

of the seven principal sorrows and seven principal joys he had experienced in life. Should they be willing to do this, he said, they would ever find in him a faithful advocate and protector, and would receive many and great graces from Almighty God.

Prayer

O Lord, who art infinitely good and art justly called the "Father of mercies,"[1] do not abandon me in the midst of the trials and afflictions of life, but grant that I may quickly and confidently have recourse to prayer whenever tribulation comes upon me, that I may merit to receive prompt consolation from Thee. Amen.

[1] 2 Cor., 1, 3.

Fourteenth Day

THE JOURNEY OF ST. JOSEPH TO BETHLEHEM, AND THE BIRTH OF JESUS

"And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem: because he was of the house and family of David. . . . There was no room for them in the inn."

(Luke, II, 4, 7.)

IT WAS by a special dispensation of Divine Providence that, as the time of Our Lord's birth drew near, Caesar Augustus ordered the census to be taken of the whole Roman empire. God had decreed that, in the general description of mankind, they too should be listed who were the parents of Him who came as a Man to restore us to perfect liberty. He thus would begin to make Himself subject to an earthly monarch, in order to free us from the cruel and tyrannical bondage of sin and the devil.

Therefore, St. Joseph willingly submitted to the decree of Caesar, and, being a descendant of David, whose native city was Bethlehem, he set out upon the long and fatiguing journey

from Nazareth to this little town with Mary his spouse, who was about to give birth to the Child Jesus. Upon arriving there, they found all the inns filled, and had to take refuge in a cave at the entrance of the town. It was in this place, unadorned and destitute of every convenience of life, that the Creator of all things decreed to enter into this world.

Wonderful humility of the King of glory! How precious in the sight of the Almighty must indeed this virtue be, since He prefers for His only-begotten Son the poverty of a lowly hovel to the gorgeous palaces of the great ones of the world.

* * *

It is difficult to conceive the intense grief of St. Joseph when he realized that he could offer no better shelter to the newly-born Saviour than a miserable stable. He, to whom God had entrusted the care of the Holy Family, would have wished to provide for his foster Child a palace worthy of Him. Instead of this, he had not even the bare necessaries of life wherewith to meet His wants. The squalid walls of an abandoned cave offered poor protection against the rigors of the season. The cradle which received Jesus was but a poor manger destined for the use of dumb animals. With a heart bruised by grief, St. Joseph pondered upon the indifference of men toward the

loving Messias, and upon the extreme poverty in which creatures had left their Creator.

But be thou consoled, O glorious Patriarch! What Jesus appreciates is not riches, nor comforts, nor luxuries of life, but hearts inflamed with love for Him: and such a heart thou hast offered Him. Resting in the arms of His sweetest Mother, Jesus perceives thy immense affection for Him, and this sentiment of love pleases His Heart more than all the comforts and riches the world could ever offer.

Jesus, indeed, made His entrance into this world in a poor and destitute cave, yet He found in the loving heart of St. Joseph, as in that of His most holy Mother, a compensation for this dire abandonment. As Mary's Immaculate bosom had been to the Saviour a place where rested all His complacency, so also St. Joseph's arms were for Him as a throne whence He began to pour the gifts of divine mercy over the parched earth.

* * *

Such is the goodness of God, that He never permits us to be overburdened by excessive sadness, but rather sends from time to time certain heavenly consolations, which make us forget our afflictions, and strengthen us against future trials. Thus also it was with St. Joseph. To his grief at the sight of man's indifference and the poverty of God's earthly

dwelling-place, succeeded an ineffable joy at the contemplation of the divine face of the Redeemer as He reclined in the arms of His holy Mother on that most blessed first Christmas night.

Who can tell the happiness of St. Joseph when he received into his arms the Divine Infant from Mary, His Mother, and pressed Him lovingly to his own heart, covering His sweet face with kisses! None but a seraph could tell the love and joy which then overflooded Joseph's soul. And when he had given vent to the expression of his love, and Mary had tenderly placed the heavenly Child in the cradle, they both knelt down to adore the King of the world made Man. They worshiped Him whom they could call their Son. St. Joseph, then, inaugurated with Mary that supreme adoration called *latria,* which is due to Jesus Christ because of His being the Son of God, the King of heaven and earth.

Example

CARDINAL MASSAIA

Devotion to St. Joseph was one of the characteristics of that great apostle of modern times, Cardinal Massaia. When he first went to Abyssinia, he found that this devotion was

almost unknown in that country. The Catholics there showed great surprise at hearing that the glorious spouse of Mary had been proclaimed Protector of the Universal Church.

The intrepid missionary immediately set himself to propagate this beautiful devotion. He dedicated the church of the mission of Escia to our Saint, and this was the first church in Abyssinia to bear that title. In the many tribulations with which his ministry abounded, he never failed to have confident recourse to St. Joseph, always obtaining from him consolation and help. Thus, for instance, when he was establishing the above-mentioned mission of Escia, he found that the people of that locality were suffering from a dearth of water. He immediately had recourse to St. Joseph, who soon answered his request, for a spring, to all appearances miraculous, arose out of the clefts of the rocks. Concerning the wonderful origin of this spring, the illustrious missionary has this to say: "The spring bursts forth from a creek in a mass of rock rising above a volcanic upheaval formed of huge boulders. It would seem difficult that water should come there from subterranean veins, nor does it seem probable that it arises from deposits of surface water."

The following fact also deserves special mention. For many years the same missionary was being afflicted with soreness of the eyes. "Hav-

ing returned to Europe in 1867," he writes, "I provided myself with a supply of glasses of different kinds before starting on my return journey, as spectacles of any kind could not be procured in Africa. I made use of these for a few years, always substituting a more powerful pair for a weaker one. Finally, having only one pair left, and not knowing where to procure others or how to remedy my infirmity, I took all the glasses and placed them before a statue of St. Joseph. I told the Saint that if he wished me to continue my labors in the vineyard of the Lord, he should be pleased to restore to me my sight. From that day until the present year, 1884, I have read and written without difficulty and without the need of glasses." [1]

Prayer

O sweet Jesus, my God and King, allow me to unite myself with Mary and Joseph in offering Thee my heart and my profound homage. Grant, moreover, that I may please Thee by my love and adoration, for to serve thee shall be to me ample recompense for the trials and persecutions which Thou shalt be pleased to send me during the present life. Amen.

[1] Card. Massaia, *I miei 35 anni, ecc.*, vol. XI, p. 47.

Fifteenth Day

ST. JOSEPH PRESENT AT THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS

"And the shepherds came with haste; and they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger." (LUKE, II, 16.)

THE Apostle St. Paul says: "I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation."[1] In very truth, God, if He sends trials, sends also consolations to help us to bear our crosses. Thus did He act with regard to St. Joseph. The foster-father of His Son had been deeply pained at the indifference of men toward the coming Redeemer and at the poverty of the place of His birth, but he experienced an overflowing measure of joy and consolation when the Divine Child appeared.

To this joy another was soon added. It had been predicted that the coming Messias would liberate His people from their sins;[2] and, behold, He had no sooner been born, than the shepherds of Bethlehem, obedient to the voice

[1] 2 COR., VII, 4.
[2] MATT., I, 21.

of the angel who told of the wonderful Child, hastened to the place to see the new-born Saviour of Israel, and offered to Him the love of their simple hearts and the homage of their whole selves.

What inexpressible joy filled St. Joseph's soul when he realized that the Saviour was already beginning His mission of mercy so soon after His birth, and that the first fruits of the Redemption were garnered from among His own people! How he admired the simple faith and openness of heart of those just men, whose righteousness made them worthy to perceive the angelic message: "Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace to men of good will"![3] How he rejoiced at the earnestness with which they obeyed the angel and came in haste to the place where lay the Divine Child! All this can better be imagined than described.

We should remember that simplicity of heart and fervor in following divine inspirations are conditions for meriting an abundance of divine grace.

* * *

The sacred writer, in his narrative of the adoration of the shepherds, makes special mention of St. Joseph. He says: "And they found Mary and Joseph, with the Child lying in the manger." Now, we should remember that noth-

[3] Luke, II, 14.

ing is contained in Holy Writ but what may serve for our edification. It is, then, part of our duty to search out the reason why St. Joseph should have thus been named in connection with this sweet and consoling mystery.

First, we may say that St. Joseph was so mentioned in connection with Mary, not only because he was her true husband, but also because to him, as well as to Mary, belonged the office of introducing these simple shepherds to the Divine Infant, and presenting Him for their adoration. We may further affirm that St. Joseph first introduced the shepherds to Mary, and that Mary in turn introduced them to Jesus; for if Mary is a short way to Jesus, St. Joseph on the other hand is a direct road to Mary.

But Joseph not only presented the shepherds to Mary and through her to Jesus, he also taught them the mystery of the Incarnation, instructing them in those things which the angel had revealed to him concerning the mission of Jesus Christ, which was to save His people. In this way did St. Joseph complete the good news which the shepherds had received from the angels. And he taught those simple men not by words alone, but by deeds as well, showing them how they were to adore the new-born Babe.

Truly blessed are they who, in the school of

St. Joseph, learn how to adore, reverence and love the Divine Saviour!

* * *

Having been instructed thus in the school of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the shepherds were not satisfied with believing, themselves, the wonderful things they had heard; they also wished to make known the great mystery of the Redemption to their fellow-countrymen, as Holy Writ testifies: "And all that heard wondered; and at those things that were told them by the shepherds."[4] The faith, love and reverence, exhibited by the holy Patriarch and his saintly spouse to the Divine Child could not but make a deep impression upon the souls of those simple men; hence, they "returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."[5]

From the angels' song St. Joseph derived also fresh matter for admiration and meditation of the wonderful works of God in the economy of salvation, and thus he acquired gradually a higher and clearer knowledge of divine things. And by this pious practise he merited for himself new and more expressive tokens of the heavenly blessings which the holy Child had brought to earth.

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[4] LUKE, II, 18.
[5] *Ibid.*, 20.

Example

A LETTER TO JOSEPH

Toward the close of the seventeenth century, there lived in a miserable garret in the then poor, squalid suburb, Laimgrube, of Vienna, the celebrated musician Paul Merten and his sixteen-year-old daughter Josephine, who was an adept in the art of embroidery. At that time Austria was greatly impoverished by reason of the wars which it had sustained against the Turks, and poor Paul Merten and his daughter often retired for the night's rest, cold and hungry.

One day, when their misery had reached its climax, Josephine, no longer able to bear the pitiable sight of her languishing father, said to him: "Father, permit me to go and seek employment; I shall then be able to help you by my weekly wages." To which the father replied: "What, my daughter, do you also wish to abandon me? Who will then assist me? No, I shall never permit such a thing."—"But, dear father," replied Josephine, "there is no other way of assisting you. Some time ago I wrote to my godmother's husband, but as yet no reply has come."—"No wonder at that," answered the father in angry tone; "writing to him is like writing to the devil." The un-

fortunate man was beside himself; grief and privation prevented him from realizing what he was saying.

"Dear father," exclaimed the young girl, with tears in her eyes, "see what wicked thoughts misery has put into your head. I shall address myself to my dear patron St. Joseph, that I may obtain help and work from him."—"Do you really believe," returned her father, bitterly, "that the poor carpenter has such power in heaven? If you do, very well; sit down and write what you want and we shall wait to see what good things he will send you."—"Father, St. Joseph is very powerful in heaven," responded the girl, meekly; "I shall write to him, and my little white turtle-dove, to which I cannot give even a tiny piece of bread today, shall carry my letter to the holy Patriarch."

Saying this, the pious girl seated herself at her father's desk and wrote: "Hail, O St. Joseph! Have pity on us in our great affliction. We have no work, nor any means of sustenance; pray our dear Lord that He help me to find work, for my father is suffering from hunger. Thy faithful child, Josephine Merten, seamstress, daughter of the musician of Laimgrube." Having finished, she folded her letter, tied it to the neck of the turtle-dove, which she let loose through the open window.

An hour had hardly passed when a vigorous knocking was heard at Merten's door, which opened to give way to a gentleman of rank. "Does Miss Merten live here?" he asked, as he entered. "Yes, sir," bruskly answered the musician, casting at the same time a searching glance toward the stranger. "What do you wish?"—"My name is Joseph Charles Hirte, and I am a jeweler of this city," the visitor returned, meekly. "I live nearby, and have just received a message from St. Joseph, to whom I am very devoted, telling me to answer in his name the letter sent to him by your daughter. I have very much work to be done and this young girl may be able to do it for me. Moreover, I was recently enrolled in the choir of the Carmelite church, and I must take lessons to perfect myself. Would you wish to act as instructor?"—"With great pleasure," exclaimed both Josephine and her father, in unison. "Very well," continued the visitor, "but permit me to advance you this sum of money, it being my custom always to pay in advance." So saying, he placed upon the table five shining ducats.

"O father," exclaimed the girl, "see how fully St. Joseph has answered my letter! What shall we do to give him thanks?"—"So let it be, Miss," added Mr. Hirte; "act always thus, and you shall not go without comfort.

I shall send through my servant all the work you need to do and I hope to see you soon again." And, turning to Mr. Merten, "Would you, sir, kindly come to my house to-morrow, and begin the lessons of which I spoke? This is my address. You cannot mistake the house, for there is a large painting of St. Joseph over the door." Having spoken thus, he saluted and departed.

But how did this sudden and unexpected assistance come upon Paul Merten and his daughter? The explanation is very simple. The dove, weakened by its long fasting, and overcome by the weight of the letter, was not able to fly very far, and in consequence took refuge in the first resting place it could find. Now, Mr. Hirte's window happened to be wide open, and the dove, which was very tame, flew within. We can imagine the surprise of Mr. Hirte upon seeing so unusual a visitor, and one, moreover, bearing a letter fastened at its neck. Having unsealed the missive, he was moved to tears by the confidence of the girl, and his own charitable heart urged him to reward her faith at once.

The reader may desire to learn what became of the pious Josephine. Mr. Hirte, admiring the girl's noble character, took her for his wife some time after, and thus was the poor daughter of Paul Merten honored also for her trust

in St. Joseph, by becoming Madame Hirte. As a mark of gratitude to her glorious Patron, she afterward had a beautiful image of St. Joseph placed as an escutcheon over the door of the house where she once had lived in want and poverty. This picture served as a perpetual memorial of the power the glorious St. Joseph displays with regard to his devout clients.

Prayer

O glorious St. Joseph, master and model of the spiritual life, I pray thee, be my guide and conduct me to thy divine foster Child, Jesus Christ, that I may learn in thy school to know, adore and love Him as my only Lord and God. Amen.

Sixteenth Day

NAMING AND CIRCUMCISION OF THE DIVINE CHILD

"And after eight days were accomplished, that the Child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel, before He was conceived in the womb."

(LUKE, II, 21.)

GOD had decreed that the world should not be redeemed except at the price of the precious blood of His own Incarnate Son. Hence, the parents of Jesus, knowing that He was to appear in all things as a common sinner, arranged that He should be circumcised eight days after His birth, as the law of Moses commanded. Thus did the new-born Babe shed the first drops of His precious blood, consecrating in this manner the first beginning of His salutary mission.

Great was the grief of Mary and Joseph on this painful occasion, when they beheld for the first time the effusion of the divine blood of the Saviour. This event brought vividly before their minds the time when this same beloved

Child, fastened to a tree and raised on high, would shed His very last drop of blood in man's behalf.

This grief of the holy couple was considerably increased by the fact that they, as was then the custom, had to perform the ceremony themselves. Picture to thyself, kind reader, the sorrow of Mary when, holding the Divine Babe in her arms, she courageously offered Him that the painful rite might be accomplished in Him. Think also of the sorrow of St. Joseph when he took in his hands the knife which was to draw forth the first drops of blood from the holy Child.

* * *

The grief of St. Joseph on this occasion was soon superseded by a great joy, which arose from the imposition of the Child's holy name. It was a custom among the Hebrews that their children should receive their name on the day on which they were circumcised. This custom dated from the time of Abraham, who received his name and was circumcised on the same day.[1] The consoling duty of naming children devolved upon the father. In consequence, St. Joseph, who was deemed the father of the Word Incarnate, imposed upon his foster Child the name Jesus, as the angel had commanded him to do when he instructed him concerning the mystery

[1] GEN., XVII.

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of the Incarnation, saying: "(Mary) shall bring forth a Son; and *thou* shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." [2]

However, we should not infer from this that Mary was excluded from this ceremony, for to her the angel had said: "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son; and thou shalt call His name Jesus." [3] We may say, therefore, that Jesus received His name from God, from the angel, from Mary, and from Joseph: from God, who is the author of the wonderful graces which this hallowed name signifies; from the angel, who announced these graces to man; from Mary, who consented to the fulfilment of God's will in this respect; and from Joseph, who actually imposed this sweet and adorable name on the Divine Child.

Who shall say what great joy filled St. Joseph's soul when he pronounced this ineffable name for the first time! No father ever experienced greater consolation than did the holy Patriarch in pronouncing the name of his beloved Son, for as the foster-father of Jesus, he entertained toward the Divine Child sentiments of the strongest and sweetest love.

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[2] MATT., I, 21.
[3] LUKE, I, 31.

The coincidence of the circumcision with the naming of Jesus recalls to our minds a great truth, very much neglected or overlooked entirely in our days: namely, the necessity of penance and mortification, if we wish to be partakers of the fruit of the copious Redemption procured for us by Jesus Christ.

In order that the infinite merits of Our Saviour may be applied to our souls and we may receive the fruit of His precious blood, it is essential that we should crucify our flesh with its concupiscences and "fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in the flesh," as St. Paul says.[4] By this we do not mean to say that the Redemption brought us by Christ needs to be supplemented, for it is perfectly complete of itself, and the merits of His precious blood are inexhaustible. But we must, in imitation of our crucified Lord, suffer and bear our own cross, and thus arrive at eternal glory. Mary and Joseph, though most holy, suffered in their lifetime most bitter sorrows; so did all the saints proportionately. It is by suffering for Christ and with Christ that we manifest the love we bear Him and that the union between the Head of the Church and its members is strengthened.

[4] Col., i, 24.

Example

ST. JOSEPH AND THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

The Society of Jesus was especially founded by St. Ignatius to promote the honor of the Divine Saviour, to propagate His name, and to procure His glory. It was but natural, then, that its members should foster a particular devotion for him whom Jesus deigned to name His father on earth.

Special mention should be made in this respect of the holy youth St. John Berchmans, who learned in the school of St. Joseph that singular fidelity in the service of God and in the fulfilment of the duties of his religious state which led him to attain in a short time to the summit of perfection. It is related by one of his novice companions that once while walking together with him, they both came to speak of the prerogatives of St. Joseph; and such was the hold which devotion to the holy Patriarch took upon their hearts, that they resolved to seize every opportunity and to exert every energy in increasing in devotion to this glorious Saint. Moreover, they made a compact to speak of his greatness on every possible occasion and to add his invocation to the Litany of the Blessed Virgin. In this way these two pious youths introduced the custom, which in

our days has been extended to the whole Church, of adding, during the month of October, a special invocation to St. Joseph to the prayers addressed to the Blessed Mother of God by the whole Catholic Church.

We read of the venerable Father Louis Lallemant, a noted writer of the same Society, that, being ardently given to the practise of the interior life, he chose St. Joseph for a model, and when about to die, he expressed the wish that an image of the holy Patriarch should be buried with him. This servant of God had received the gift of rousing men's hearts to special love and devotion for St. Joseph, from whom he obtained all he desired.

To mention one instance. One year, as the annual feast of the holy Patriarch was drawing near, he told two professors of rhetoric of the college of Bourges to encourage their pupils to be devoted to the foster-father of Jesus, affirming that he himself had always received through this great Saint whatever graces and favors he desired. These two professors, moved by great confidence, urged their pupils to celebrate the coming festival with all possible devotion, especially recommending them to approach holy communion in St. Joseph's honor. Each of them sent up also a petition to the Saint asking for a special favor, which was granted them. One of these professors was

Father James Nouet, who asked to be able to write and speak worthily of Our Lord Jesus Christ; which favor he received. Later, he entered the Society of Jesus and wrote books which are a rich mine for souls especially desirous of intimate union with our divine Redeemer.[5]

Many other members of the said Society made themselves conspicuous by devotion to St. Joseph. Thus, the venerable Father Baltassar Alvarez, an ardent client of the Queen of Heaven, was advised by Mary herself to foster devotion to her holy spouse. Of Father Peter Cotone it is related that, when he lay dying, Mary appeared to him and assisted him in his last agony, as a reward for the affection he had shown toward St. Joseph and for the zeal with which he had promoted devotion to the holy Patriarch.[6]

Prayer

My Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who didst wish to consecrate the imposition of Thy most holy name with the shedding of Thy precious blood, cause me, I beseech Thee, in imitation of Mary and Joseph, to crucify my passions, whence I may experience how sweet Thy name

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[5] P. Luigi Lallemant, S. J., *Doctrine Spirituelle*. Paris, 1694.
[6] P. Gius. Ant. Patrignani, S. J., Il Divoto di S. Giuseppe, *passim* in *Vita*.

is, which indeed is as honey to my lips, sweet melody to my ears, and perennial joy to my heart. Amen.

Seventeenth Day

ST. JOSEPH AT THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

"And after the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord." (LUKE, II, 22.)

GOD having entrusted St. Joseph with the care of the temporal affairs of the Holy Family, it pertained to him to see that all the prescriptions of the Law of Moses concerning the new-born Babe and His Mother should be fulfilled.

Now, there were two laws which Moses had laid down regarding the new-born children. The first of these was a special law which regarded the first-born of men and animals only. When God freed His people from the yoke of Pharao, He commanded the destroying angel to strike the first-born of every Egyptian family, but He spared those of the Israelites. In consequence of this, He had reserved to Himself all the first-born children of Israel, and commanded

that they should be offered up to His Divine Majesty in the Temple. This offering, however, was subsequently changed by God in the consecration to Him of the whole tribe of Levi, which had been chosen as the source from which the Jewish priesthood should be supplied. Accordingly, every male child had, indeed, to be presented in the Temple, but was subsequently redeemed by its parents at the price of five shekels.

The second precept was general and regarded the offering to be made for the newly-born child. This offering was to take place when the time of the mother's purification was ended, which, in case of a male child, was forty days after its birth. This offering consisted of a lamb and a pigeon or a turtle-dove: or, if the mother were poor, of a pair of turtle-doves or two pigeons. This offering was both a sacrifice in expiation of the legal sin in which the child had been conceived and born, and a holocaust, being as it were, a token of the total consecration of the child to God.

Now, St. Joseph, accustomed as he was to obey every prescription of the Law, did not fail to submit, together with his saintly spouse, to these two precepts and fulfil them minutely. How pleasing was to Jesus this singular obedience of Joseph and Mary! What a source of

graces it was to the holy couple! "An obedient man shall speak of victory." [1]

* * *

In presenting Jesus in the Temple and offering him to the Eternal Father, St. Joseph was conscious of the fact that this oblation was nothing else than a figure and, so to speak, a prelude of that great sacrifice which Jesus was one day to make of Himself on the tree of the cross for the sins of mankind. Being well-instructed in the divine Scriptures and having a full knowledge of the prophecy of Isaias, who describes the future passion of Christ as an historian or eye-witness would do, St. Joseph contemplated in spirit, whilst offering Jesus, this divine Saviour, whose hands and feet were one day to be pierced, whose brow was to be encircled by a crown of thorns, whose sacred side was to be opened by a spear, so that every drop of His blood might flow for man's redemption.

Indeed, after St. Joseph had thus offered Jesus to the Eternal Father, the words of the prophet were verified in him: "The iron pierced his soul." [2] But why did he redeem Jesus with five shekels, except that he might thus take care of Him and nourish Him and watch over His life until the great day on which He was to sacrifice Himself for the sins of the world?

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[1] PROV., XXI, 28.
[2] PS. CIV, 18.

Great indeed is the dignity of St. Joseph! By offering Jesus in the Temple, he pledged himself to preserve the life of the Divine Victim, which was one day to be immolated for us. Wherefore, he deserves to be styled, in a certain sense, the co-Redeemer of the human race, or, better still, "the most faithful helper of the great Counsel," as St. Bernard calls him.[3]

* * *

The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple gave an occasion to Mary and Joseph of showing how deeply rooted in their hearts was the spirit of humility and poverty. Mary, by consenting to have the prescribed offering made for her showed that she willingly submitted to a law which otherwise did not bind her, since she had contracted no stain whatever in the virginal conception and birth of Jesus. The Mother of God obeyed the law in the same spirit of humility which had led Jesus, though conceived without sin, to submit to the rite of circumcision. St. Joseph, on the other hand, in making this same offering, chose to be looked upon, in the eyes of the world, as the spouse of one considered outside of the law until the formalities of the Jewish rite had been fulfilled.

Besides that, by choosing to make the offering of a pair of turtle-doves or two young

[3] Homil. II, *super Evangelium "Missus est."*

pigeons, St. Joseph publicly acknowledged that he and his holy spouse were to be numbered among the poor, for such indeed was the offering demanded of this class. We may gather from all this how well these two holy persons understood the spirit of Christ: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich He became poor for your sakes; that through His poverty you might be rich."[4]

Example

EFFICACY OF THE MEDAL OF ST. JOSEPH

It is a pious practise among Catholics to carry about themselves the medal of some canonized saint. Such a holy object not only suggests chaste and holy thoughts, but it also helps our devotion by keeping before our eyes the virtues of the saint it represents. Among such medals, that of St. Joseph is with reason especially recommended, and the holy Patriarch has often been pleased to shower benefits upon those who wear this medal with confidence and devotion.

There was a young man in France, named Emanuel N., who had the misfortune of losing his parents when only twenty-one years of age, which event had caused him to enter upon a large inheritance. But this great wealth

[4] 2 Cor., VIII, 9.

had an evil effect upon his mind, which was already faltering in matters of religion. He came into possession of his money only to give himself up to a life of dissipation and extravagance. From Cognac, in Charente, his home, he betook himself to Baden and there indulged in gambling, which in a short time led him to lose a very large sum of money. He then gave himself to the superstitious practise of spiritism, of which he became an ardent propagator. As a natural consequence he soon lost faith altogether, and with faith morals also.

One day he had the good fortune to meet a pious lady who compassionated the miserable state into which he had fallen. She gave him a medal of St. Joseph, asking him to carry it about him and assuring him that the Saint would certainly not abandon him in his spiritual needs. Not long after, while in the town of Montélimar, he was seized with a severe and mysterious illness which brought him to the brink of death.

One night, while lying on his bed of suffering, he had some sort of vision, which at first astounded him. It seemed to him as if the infernal abyss were ready to swallow him and the devils within were making merry over the victim they would soon hold in their grasp. He thought his last hour had come. He then remembered that he still possessed certain letters

which he would have desired destroyed; so he forced himself from his bed across the room to reach them.

While searching in his mantle for these letters, he came across the medal given him by his pious acquaintance. This was a moment of grace. He pressed the medal fervently to his heart and lips, and besought St. Joseph to obtain for him forgiveness from God, promising that he would go to confession as soon as he was able to leave his room.

He had hardly finished his prayer when he fell into a gentle refreshing sleep. In the morning, on awakening, the first thing which drew his attention was the medal of St. Joseph, which he still pressed to his heart. True to his promises, he hurried in search of a confessor, gave up forever the practise of spiritism, and began to do works of penance and charity. He soon after started on pious pilgrimages. Among other shrines, he visited the Holy House of Loreto and the famous Sainte Baume,[5] where St. Mary Magdalen, patron of penitents, lived so many years in the practise of penance and the continuous contemplation of heavenly things.

Thus it was that St. Joseph converted this

[5] This is the name of a mountain in Provence, near the summit of which is the celebrated grotto, where St. Mary Magdalen passed the last thirty years of her life. This spot is the center of many pilgrimages. The word Baume is from the medieval latin "Balma," and means a grotto or cell carved out of the rock.

dissolute young man, and made him a model of Christian piety.

Prayer

O glorious St. Joseph, how greatly indebted we are to thee for having with Mary offered Jesus to the Eternal Father in the Temple to the end that His just anger might be appeased! We owe thee thanks also for having preserved and nourished this divine Victim destined to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. Obtain for us to imitate thy virtues and in particular thy obedience, thy humility and thy spirit of poverty, that we may merit to partake of the fruits of the Redemption. Amen.

Eighteenth Day

SORROW AND JOY OF ST. JOSEPH BECAUSE OF THE PROPHECY OF SIMEON

"Behold, this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce." (LUKE, II, 34, 35.)

AMONG the many graces which God, in His infinite goodness, is wont to bestow on His faithful servants in order to encourage them in the way of perfection and also to console them in their trials, is acquaintance with spiritual persons of holy and edifying life.

This grace was not denied to St. Joseph, as well as to his chaste spouse. In fact, it was God's will that on the occasion of the presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple, they both should meet with two pure and holy souls, who were animated with the same spirit of holiness and who, too, were longing for the advent of the kingdom of God among men. These two holy persons were Simeon and Anna, both just in the sight of the Heavenly Father and both illustrious for virtue and good deeds.

For many years these servants of God had been waiting for the consolation promised to Israel: and lo! at the moment in which the Divine Child was brought into the Temple, Simeon, moved by the Holy Spirit, also entered into the holy place. He took from Mary's hands the Child into his own arms and, filled with the Holy Ghost, gave expression to his joy and thanksgiving. On the other hand, Anna, the Prophetess, who remained in the Temple night and day serving God by prayer and fasting, came upon the holy group at the same moment, praising the Lord and speaking of Him to all that expected the consolation of Israel.

The company of these two holy persons replenished the soul of St. Joseph with unspeakable joy. He returned thanks to God, who had raised up among His own people such devout followers of His Law, and he took occasion from this event to walk with renewed energy along the way to perfection.

* * *

Earth knows no unalloyed happiness. The words of benediction, thanks and praise uttered by Simeon were mingled with expressions of sorrow and grief, for the holy man said also that Jesus would be set up for the rise and fall of many in Israel and for a sign that would be contradicted. Alas! it was not necessary to wait very long to see these words fulfilled.

Meanwhile, they pierced as with a sword Joseph's own soul, for he then learned clearly that He who was his foster Son would suffer most bitter torments in the future and that his own holy spouse would experience a sorrow which was to be second only to that of her Divine Son Jesus.

In that very moment the vision of a terrible reality that would never pass away was presented to his mind. He saw at a glance, yet with wonderful clearness, the future intense suffering of Jesus, who longed to redeem the world, cost what it may. He perceived the revilings that were to be heaped upon Him and the patience with which He was to endure them. He saw also that many would not appreciate the goodness of the Saviour, but would repay Him with ingratitude; nay, they would rebel against Him and persecute Him with blind hatred. He saw that his holy spouse, Mary, the companion of Jesus in His sorrows, would be also recompensed with the same ingratitude, and this, not for a few years, but as long as the human race would abide upon this earth.

Which of us can measure the grief of a most loving father, a most affectionate spouse as was St. Joseph, when he thus beheld in vision the future sorrows of his foster Son and of his own beloved true spouse?

* * *

We have said that God never permits His servants to be oppressed with sorrow without sending them consolations to help them to bear their griefs. Accordingly, He did not allow the soul of St. Joseph to remain weighed down with the thoughts of the future passion of Jesus and of the sorrows of Mary, without coming to his help. He let him learn, through the holy Prophet Simeon, of the great harvest of sanctity and salvation that Jesus would reap through His infinite merits: "This Child is set for the resurrection of many in Israel."

St. Joseph had already realized what grace of salvation the Saviour of the world was bringing to the simple of heart, when he witnessed the shepherds adoring at the crib, filled with divine faith infused into them from above. And now he beheld Simeon and Anna overwhelmed, as it were, with supernatural favors because of their firm belief in the newly-born Messias.

He could well infer that if Jesus was to be for many, even among the Hebrews, a stumbling block, a cause of scandal, He would no less be a secure hope of salvation for all who would believe in Him and love Him with sincere and devoted hearts. Thus was St. Joseph given to understand that the publicans and sinners would find resurrection and life through the saving power of Christ, and would experience in themselves the saying of the prophet: "Because

with the Lord there is mercy; and with Him plentiful redemption."[1]

Example

ST. JOSEPH LEADS RENEGADES BACK TO RELIGION AND VIRTUE

The great power of St. Joseph in leading renegade sinners back to their religion and to God is shown in numerous instances. In the acts of the saints, compiled by the Bollandists, we read of a once honest and virtuous youth in Lyons, who, wishing to secure his salvation, was seriously thinking of entering a Religious Order. But, unfortunately, his father and mother having placed all their earthly hopes in him, did all they could to dissuade him from his holy resolve. They succeeded, alas, but too well. However, they soon had reason to repent of their conduct, for their son gradually grew lax in the performance of his duties, until he finally abandoned every practise of devotion. As was to be expected, he gave himself up to a licentious life, and ended by falling into the most shameful disorders. He left his family and entered the army. Then his passions knew no bridle, so that he literally became the slave of vice and disorder.

[1] Ps., CXXIX, 7.

The parents of this unfortunate young man began then to deplore the opposition they had created to their son's purpose of following the religious state. They exerted all their energy to recall him from his evil ways and awaken in him sentiments of faith and morality. But all their efforts failed, their son growing every day more hardened in sin. By an inspiration of Heaven, they turned their thoughts to St. Joseph and began to implore help and assistance from this great protector of the Christian family, confidently asking him to take their prodigal son under his fatherly care.

St. Joseph was not slow in answering the humble petition of those unfortunate parents. After they had prayed fervently for three days, the youth entered into himself and reflected seriously upon the danger he was in of losing his soul. He saw with a shudder the abyss of vice into which he had fallen and recalled the innocent days of his childhood. He was thereupon seized with shame for his past extravagances and bitterly bewailed his faults. He decided to return home as soon as circumstances permitted. He left the army, resumed his former practises of devotion, and was once again the virtuous youth he had been before.

All who desire the conversion of a father, of a son, of a friend or of an acquaintance, should learn from this fact to confidently have

recourse to St. Joseph, who will intercede with Jesus and obtain for these persons the grace of sincerely returning to God.[2]

Prayer

O glorious St. Joseph, I compassionate thee in the sorrow which thou didst experience upon hearing of the future sufferings of Jesus and Mary. However, at the same time, I rejoice with thee because of the happiness which filled thy soul when Simeon foretold the resurrection and life which Jesus would bring to many in Israel. Obtain for me, I beseech thee, that I may faithfully follow the teaching of the Divine Master, and that I may thus come to be numbered among the blessed who will rejoice for all eternity in His company. Amen.

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[2] Bollandists, *Acta Sanctorum, S. Joseph,* March 19.

Nineteenth Day

ST. JOSEPH PRESENT AT THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

"And entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary His Mother. And falling down they adored Him. And opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh." (MATT., II, 11.)

GOD having decreed that all things should be renewed in His Son made Man, chose to display His wonderful power both to Jew and Gentile even before Jesus gave up His life on Calvary. As an angel had been sent from heaven to announce the good tidings to the shepherds, so a new star was created to bring these same tidings to the Wise Men of the East.

These upright and religious Magi, noticing the star, and being enlightened by the Holy Ghost, left their homes without delay and followed the star until it brought them to where the Child lay. They entered the rude hut, found the Child and His Mother, and kneeling down, adored Him, offering Him gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Though Holy Scripture does not expressly say that St. Joseph was present at the adoration of the Magi, we may well believe that he really was in the hut when these Wise Men entered. He had been present when the shepherds had come to adore the new-born Babe, and it seems only meet that he should also have witnessed the marvels of grace worked by the Holy Ghost in the Wise Men, who represented the first fruits of the Gospel among the Gentile world. As the holy Patriarch had exultantly seen the working of salvation among those of his own nation, so it was becoming that he should also see the wonders which the infant Saviour had determined to work among strangers to the fold. The silence of Scripture on this point is no argument against the pious belief that St. Joseph was present at the adoration of the Magi, for not all that took place was consigned to the Holy Book, but only those things which are necessary to confirm our faith in the Incarnation. So, we should not wonder if many circumstances are omitted in Holy Writ which, however, may be inferred from the context.

We may say that St. Joseph's presence at the adoration of the Magi was a worthy reward for the readiness with which he himself had adhered with heart and mind to the mystery of the Incarnation. At the word of the angel he had

believed without hesitation that the Child which Mary was to bring into the world was truly the Messias, the Redeemer of mankind. It was but just that this lively faith should now be both rewarded and strengthened, by his witnessing the vocation of the Gentiles and the graces which the Divine Child was beginning to bestow upon them. There was no danger, as some might imagine, that his presence should lead the Magi into believing that the Child was his natural Son, and that His origin was that common to all men. The Holy Ghost, who had led these Wise Men to Jesus, could also inwardly illumine their minds concerning His supernatural origin. On the other hand, explicit faith in St. Joseph's perpetual virginity was only to be propagated as a truth at a later period in the Church.

I rejoice with thee, O St. Joseph, for the immense gladness which filled thy heart when thou didst see the sages of the East bowing low before thy foster Child and offering to Him, with their treasures, also their hearts; nay, their whole selves.

* * *

The shepherds, men of simple hearts, had been introduced to Jesus by St. Joseph, who taught them how to adore and revere the newly-born Saviour. Now, as we may assume, the holy Patriarch performed the same function in regard to the Magi, completing in them the in-

terior teaching they had received from the Holy Ghost.

There is, however, a circumstance associated with the adoration of the Magi which clearly shows the high office which St. Joseph fulfilled in regard to the Saviour. We read in Holy Scripture that these sages fell on their knees and adored the Child. This act of worship should teach us what honor and submission the great and wise ones of the world owe to God, who is the Lord of science and the dispenser of crowns and scepters. In this wise also, the Magi rendered testimony to the royalty of Jesus. "For He must reign, until He hath put all His enemies under His feet."[1] Now, this great truth was confirmed by St. Joseph's presence, who, being himself a descendant of the royal house of David, fell also on his knees together with the Magi and adored the newborn Child. He thus initiated and consecrated, as it were, the worship which kings and learned men of this world are bound to pay to Christ our Saviour throughout all ages.

* * *

The Magi, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, did not content themselves with adoring the Saviour in spirit and truth. They also offered Him, as a sign of their obedience and homage, gifts of gold, incense and myrrh. By making

[1] 1 Cor., xv, 25.

this threefold offering, they attested their belief in the royalty of Jesus, signified by gold; in His priesthood signified by incense, and in His humanity signified by myrrh. They being, as it were, the first fruits of the Gentiles, inaugurated that universal worship with which the world converted to the faith was one day to honor Christ our Saviour.

The gifts of the Wise Men were handed to St. Joseph, whom they rightly understood to have the care of all His temporal affairs, since he was the head of the Holy Family. St. Joseph on his part received these gifts with sincere gratitude. He used the money for the greater honor and glory of God and for the relief of those whom he found poor and needy, knowing them to be in very deed the dearest friends and brethren of Jesus. He burned the incense and myrrh in honor of the Divine Child, acknowledging Him as the Lord of the world.

Example

THE VENERABLE MOTHER CATHERINE OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Among the most fervent servants of St. Joseph is to be numbered the Venerable Mother Catherine of St. Augustine. On the day on which she was confirmed she received the name

Mary Catherine Joseph, and throughout her life she was especially devoted to her patron saint. Later, she was sent from France, her mother country, to Quebec, Canada, in the pioneer days of that land. She became directress of the hospital of Quebec and spent many years of her life in the service of the sick.

One year, on Ascension Day, while in an ecstasy, she saw Our Lord Jesus Christ ascend up to His throne in heaven. He was accompanied by a large cortège of saints, in the first rank of whom she observed St. Joseph. The procession entered heaven and Jesus took His place at the right hand of the Eternal Father. St. Joseph then drew near and pointing to our blessed Lord, addressed the Most Holy Trinity thus: "Behold, Divine Father, the talent which Thou didst entrust to me on earth. I give it back to Thee not only doubled but manifoldly increased, as these innumerable souls whom He has saved can attest."

The Eternal Father replied: "Good and faithful servant, thou hast been on earth the loyal steward of My house; but here in heaven thou shalt be, not a steward or servant, but a lord and master. Thou shalt enjoy great power over all My possessions, since thou hadst the honor of commanding My own Son."

Here the venerable mother adds: "I then turned to St. Joseph and said: Great Saint,

ask the King of glory that I may never separate myself from His love, but that I may live united to Him for all eternity. Through thy intercession He will grant me every grace."

"The favorable reception of my request," continues the saintly nun, "was promised me, providing I should keep the resolve I had already made, to live in abandonment to the divine pleasure. I saw also the place which I should occupy in heaven, if I remained faithful. There I hope to love Jesus, Mary and Joseph for all eternity and to be loved by them forever." [2]

Let us learn from this faithful servant of St. Joseph to live according to the divine pleasure, and we shall obtain all that we solicit through the intermediary powers of this great Patriarch.

Prayer

O glorious St. Joseph, who, in union with the Magi didst give to the great and learned of the world a bright example of the adoration which they owe to Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords, make the reign of so gentle a Prince extend itself far and wide, and grant that we all may offer Him the pure gold of our love, the incense of our adoration, and the myrrh of a sincere repentance. Amen.

[2] Royuebau, in *Vita*, c. 5.

Twentieth Day

ST. JOSEPH IN THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

"Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise, and take the Child and His Mother, and flee into Egypt: and be there until I shall tell thee." (MATT., II, 13.)

SIMPLICITY and humility of heart lead man to God; duplicity and perversity estrange Him from our soul, for it is written: "A perverse heart is abominable to the Lord."[1] The Magi humbly listened to the voice of the Holy Ghost and thereby merited to find the Saviour. Herod, instead, fostered nought but egotistical thoughts, and Jesus hid Himself from him.

This cunning and cruel monarch had asked the holy Wise Men to return to him after they had found the newly-born King of the Jews, so that he, too, as he said, might go and adore Jesus. In reality, however, he sought but to slay the Saviour of the world. An angel then warned those holy men in a dream, of the king's treacherous and murderous designs, and bade

[1] PROV., XI, 20.

them return by another route to their homes. Herod soon became aware that he had been deluded by the Wise Men, and resolved to rid himself of Jesus, cost what it might. Accordingly, he sent his soldiery to Bethlehem with the order to kill every male child of two years and under, in Bethlehem and in all the borders thereof.

But the Lord, who always takes special care of His elect, sent an angel to Joseph, and ordered him, as the head of the Holy Family, to arise immediately and take the Child and His Mother and flee into Egypt, for Herod sought to take His life away.

What a sword of sorrow then pierced the tender heart of Joseph! Hitherto he had bewailed the indifference of men toward the Messias. But now it was something worse than indifference: it was bitter hate and black ingratitude, stimulated by a vaunting ambition and a barbarous cruelty.

How can the heart of man conceive designs so dark? The Word Incarnate, dwelling from all eternity in the bosom of His Father and enjoying infinite bliss, had come down upon earth and taken the form of man that He might bear our misery. And man now sets himself to slay his Saviour! Neither the weakness of infancy, nor the grace of childhood, nor aught else can influence Herod to desist from his ne-

farious design. How these sad thoughts must have made the tender heart of St. Joseph bleed!

* * *

The obedience of St. Joseph in the flight into Egypt is indeed most remarkable. If we except Jesus Christ, who died for us in compliance with His Father's wish, and Mary, who lent a ready ear to the angel's message concerning the mystery of the Incarnation to be accomplished in her womb, no one ever practised the virtue of obedience more perfectly than did the holy Patriarch. With what perfection, in fact, did he not comply with the angel's order, when he was told to flee by night into a strange country together with the Holy Family? He rose immediately, took the Child and His Mother and set out for Egypt.

All the circumstances which surround this sudden departure tended to make the journey a difficult one, but they also place in bold relief the heroic obedience of St. Joseph. This precipitate departure did not permit him to procure even those things most indispensable for a journey so long and so perilous. To this was added a lack of information concerning the road to be chosen to reach the place of exile. What way shall he go? By sea or by land? But in the one case as well as in the other the life of Jesus and that of Mary must be exposed to continual danger. And where shall

he stop? Among what people shall he live And how long?

But the obedience of St. Joseph surmounted all these obstacles. It was a noble, an heroic sacrifice he was making of his will to the holy will of God, and such an act is truly worthy to be proposed for our imitation.

* * *

The Lord never omits to reward the obedience of His servants, and He often does so even during the present life. Accordingly, He recompensed the promptitude and submission of St. Joseph to His will by making him a witness, as we may suppose, of the conversion of some among the Egyptians to the faith of the true God. The prophet had said: "The burden of Egypt. Behold, the Lord will ascend upon a swift cloud and will enter into Egypt. And the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst thereof. . . . And the Lord shall be known by Egypt: and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall worship him with sacrifice and offerings." [2] It is the common opinion of the Fathers and ecclesiastical writers that the fulfilment of this prophecy began when Our Lord entered Egypt. The presence of the Son of God made Man marked the end of the worship paid by that pagan people to false gods,

[2] Is., XIX, 1, 21.

and brought a number of them to the true faith by the hidden operation of divine grace.

It is no small glory of St. Joseph to have been chosen by God to carry the light of Jesus Christ to idolatrous Egypt and to be in some way His minister in the hidden marvels of grace which the Divine Child accomplished in that land. For he was in very deed an unexceptionable witness of the divinity of the Saviour and of the miracles which had surrounded His birth. He was thus enabled to carry the light of truth to those among whom he now lived, by means of his saintly life, adding also an efficacious persuasion whenever circumstances allowed.

Example

Almsgiving in Honor of St. Joseph

One form of devotion very agreeable to St. Joseph consists in giving alms to the poor, in memory of the great privations which the holy Patriarch endured on his journey from Palestine to Egypt. This act of mercy performed in his honor is singularly pleasing to him and he loves to recompense richly those who practise it.

It was formerly a custom in Tuscany to choose the feast of St. Joseph as the day on which to perform in his honor some act of

charity toward the poor. Each family was wont to invite on that day some poor person, whom they would treat as a brother. They would attend to his most urgent needs; neither would they permit him to go without bestowing on him a plentiful alms. Sometimes this act of mercy took a special form. Three poor people were selected, to whom meat and drink were served in honor of Jesus, Mary and Joseph; nay, at times the Christian family would attend permanently to the needs of those destitute poor.

Thus does the devotion to the holy Patriarch favor the practise of Christian charity among the faithful. Would to God that such beautiful customs were still to continue, despite the blight of infidelity which is daily extending over the world!

St. Vincent Ferrer relates an anecdote which is to the point. A pious man was in the habit of inviting to his table each year on Christmas Day a poor woman with her young child, together with an old man of good character. He treated them with great attention and affection, intending to honor by this act the Holy Family. When the hour of his death came, Jesus, Mary and Joseph appeared to him and said that since he had invited them so many times to his table in the person of the poor, it was but just that they should in their turn invite him to their

feast-table in paradise. "Come with us, then," they added, "good and faithful servant; thou shalt partake forever of the Heavenly Banquet." Thus did that pious Christian place his soul into the hands of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and enter with them into paradise, there to enjoy forever the vision of God.

The pious practise consisting of sheltering and nourishing one or more destitute poor in honor of St. Joseph can be performed on the day of the feast of the holy Patriarch or on any other day of the year, as one may desire. If it be impossible to entertain or feed strangers, one can at least choose three poor people and give them alms in honor of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Prayer

O glorious St. Joseph, who, to obey the command of Heaven, didst share with Jesus and Mary the rigors of a painful exile and didst become the happy witness of the miracles performed in favor of the Egyptians, obtain for me the grace that I may never estrange Jesus from my heart by sin, but always follow faithfully His divine inspirations. Amen.

Twenty-first Day

ST. JOSEPH'S RETURN FROM EGYPT

"But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph in Egypt, saying: Arise, and take the Child and His Mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead that sought the life of the Child."
(MATT., II, 19-20.)

THE Holy Family remained in Egypt until the death of Herod. During all these years, Jesus, Mary and Joseph experienced all the hardships of exile: hunger, want of the necessaries of life, and especially separation from friends and relatives, who might have sympathized with them in their troubles and assisted them in their needs.

But it was particularly upon St. Joseph that the weight of exile rested. God had entrusted him with the temporal welfare of the Holy Family. Day after day, in the sweat of his brow, he earned the bread which was to be the sustenance of their lives. In the course of his labors he also had often to put up with the reproach of some, with the coldness and indifference of others.

At last the days of exile drew to a close. Herod was dead, and the angel of the Lord appeared again to Joseph and told him to take the Child and His Mother and return to the land of Israel. This was for our holy couple a source of great joy. It consoled and gladdened their souls as a ray of sunshine refreshes and enlivens the parched earth in a hot, dreary summer. They were soon to see again the land of their birth, the land filled with the gifts of the Most High, the land sung of by the prophets, inhabited by friends and relatives, the land which, in spite of its infidelity, was still the land privileged by God, since in it the Word had deigned to take flesh to save mankind.

The thought of the crimes of Herod, however, could not but sadden the souls of Mary and Joseph. They recollected how the cruelty and ambition of that godless monarch had brought desolation and mourning upon so many Jewish families. And now, by a just punishment of God, he was snatched away by a death as terrible as it was ignominious. Having rejected divine grace, having even attempted the life of the Word Incarnate, he finally experienced the severity of divine justice, the time having come for him to expiate a long series of iniquities and crimes.

On the other hand, the return to Israel was not free from difficulties and sufferings for

the Holy Family. The journey was long and fatiguing, St. Joseph being ignorant of the way, and the country round about being infested by robbers and malefactors. Moreover, the Infant Jesus had grown so much that He could no longer be easily carried, nor could He walk the entire way home. But Mary and Joseph were well aware that by returning to Judea they were fulfilling the divine will, and this thought made them overcome all the hardships and discomforts of this long and weary journey.

* * *

Man has no fixed abode here below. Hence he cannot, while on earth, enjoy lasting peace, but he must always put up with trials, crosses, and contradictions. The Holy Family set out for the land of Israel in accordance with the angel's command; but hardly had St. Joseph surmounted the difficulties of the long and dangerous journey, when the news came to his ears that Caesar Augustus had given Archelaus, Herod's son, half his father's kingdom, with the title "Tetrarch of Judea." Archelaus inherited, besides, his father's ambition and cruelty.

St. Joseph was in doubt as to the course he should pursue. Should he fix his abode in Judea, where Archelaus might persecute the Divine Child, or should he continue his journey until he came to some retreat where he

could find safety, peace and rest for his spouse and the Child? In this perplexity he had recourse to prayer, and an angel enlightened him by advising him to retire into the quarters of Galilee.

St. Joseph did not fail to reflect upon the deeper meaning of all these successive fatiguing journeys and precipitous flights, which in reality were nothing but a striking symbol of the vicissitudes of sorrows and triumphs to which the Church upon earth is subjected. He foresaw the persecutions which would come upon the spouse of Christ till the end of time, and his soul was pierced anew with grief. "The light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil." [1]

* * *

In the midst of all the tribulations, hardships and sufferings which St. Joseph underwent while providing for the safety and welfare of the Word Incarnate and His Mother, his only comfort, his only consolation, was prayer.

Night and day "he cried to the Lord with his voice; with his voice he made supplication to the Lord; in His sight he poured out his prayer and before Him declared his trouble." [2] His prayer was incessant, his conversation with

[1] JOHN, III, 19.
[2] PSALM, CXLI, 1, 2.

God constant and habitual, as is shown by the four prophetic visions recorded in Holy Scripture as granted to him by God, for these are ordinarily the recompense of familiar union with the Godhead.

Happy is he who, in the difficulties of life, has recourse to humble and faithful prayer. He can rest assured of the divine assistance, for it is written: "Whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive."[3] But it is necessary to persevere in prayer, according to the warning "that we ought always to pray, and not to faint,"[4] and in conformity with the custom of our divine Saviour Himself, who "went out into a mountain to pray, and passed the whole night in the prayer of God."[5]

Example

ST. JOSEPH SUCCORS THE INFIRM

Toward the close of the last century, there lived in Vienna a poor widow named Wilhelmina Rielz, who was suffering from a dangerous and painful malady which confined her to her bed. The Franciscan nuns had the kindness to receive her into their hospital. The doctors attending the hospital declared that an operation

[3] Mark, xi, 24.
[4] Luke, xviii, 1.
[5] Luke, vi, 12.

was necessary in order to remove an ulcer which had developed at the back of one ear. The incisions were painful in the extreme, and several times the poor woman fainted. At last the doctors said that there was little hope for recovery, as the disease had already invaded the bones and permeated the whole system.

The physical suffering of the poor woman was very great indeed; but what most afflicted her was her being unable to procure the necessaries of life for her four helpless and almost starving young children. In this extreme misery she turned to her patron St. Joseph with great confidence, and begged him to come to her aid. On the following day she received holy communion according to that same intention, and soon after she fell into a restful slumber, during which she saw the holy Patriarch, who consoled and promised to assist her. When she awoke she told the attendants what she had experienced, and expressed the conviction that she would soon be cured. In fact, the wound began to heal perfectly, and the doctors declared they had never witnessed so extraordinary a recovery. The nuns also and the sick in the hospital ceased not to admire the wonderful cure and rendered fervent thanks to God for it.

Not long after, the fortunate woman, who, besides perfect health had also recovered her peace of mind, was permitted to leave the hos-

pital. So complete was her recovery that the wound at the back of the ear did not even leave a scar. Thus could she provide for her dear children with the work of her hands. In such a way had St. Joseph rewarded his faithful servant. It is true, the holy Patriarch does not always restore the bodily health of his devoted clients, but he never fails to obtain for them resignation and patience in their sufferings, that they may thus merit eternal life.

Prayer

O glorious St. Joseph, who to a spirit of perfect obedience didst unite the practise of habitual prayer, obtain for me the grace always to have recourse to God in the trials of life and to pray with such frequency, that prayer may ever be my habitual and dearest occupation. Amen.

Twenty-second Day

JOURNEY OF ST. JOSEPH TO JERUSALEM AT THE PASCHAL FEAST

"And when He was twelve years old, they (were) *going up to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast."* (LUKE, II, 42.)

THE Law of Moses prescribed that every adult person of the male sex should present himself in Jerusalem before the Lord three times every year; that is, at the feast of the Azymes or Pasch, at the feast of Weeks, and at the feast of Tabernacles.[1] But, as many of the Jews had their dwelling in distant regions and could not easily undertake so frequent a journey to Jerusalem, a lawful custom had reduced that law, which in course of time had become too onerous to be literally observed. As a matter of fact, it was generally deemed sufficient for those living in distant parts to resort to the Holy City once only during the year, and the Pasch was the time chosen for that visit.

This, indeed, was the case with the Holy

[1] DEUT. XVI, 16.

Family, as Nazareth was more than one hundred miles distant from Jerusalem. Hence, it sufficed for St. Joseph to journey there once only every year; and this he did not fail to do, being, as he was, so careful an observer of the lawful customs of his nation. Furthermore, although women were not bound by this law, yet his holy spouse Mary was wont to accompany him on this journey, as the Sacred Text shows. Children also were not bound by this law until they had reached the age of reason, which time was to be determined by their parents.

Now, as long as Archelaus, that cruel and arrogant monarch, continued reigning over Judea, the life of the Saviour was in perpetual danger, and therefore Mary and Joseph did not think it fit to bring the Divine Child with them on their journey to Jerusalem. But now that the impious king was dead and Jesus had reached the age of twelve years, He accompanied His parents to Jerusalem, there to adore the Lord with them, and give His countrymen the example of fervent prayer.

We cannot here too much admire the conduct of the members of the Holy Family, who, to better please and serve God, exposed themselves to the inconveniences of such a long and weary journey. Alas! how many Christians are slow in fulfilling the comparatively light precepts of

Holy Church, such as the keeping of feast-days or the receiving, at least once during the year, the Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist!

O glorious St. Joseph, grant that we may never transgress the commandments of God and of Holy Church, since upon the observance of the same depends the sanctification of our lives and our own eternal salvation.

* * *

It may be asked, What was the virtue which prompted the Holy Family, and especially St. Joseph, to observe so faithfully the prescriptions of Moses regarding this annual journey to Jerusalem? To this we answer that it was the virtue of religion, which consists in the readiness of our will to perform all things pertaining to divine service and worship. Now, this eminent virtue does not only embrace internal acts, such as prayer, adoration and the like; it includes external acts as well, such as the offering of sacrifice, prostrations, the paying of tithes and so forth. By means of such external acts the soul is brought to love, praise and serve God internally.

St. Joseph, animated as he was by a firm and sincere spirit of religion, was not content to adore God from the depths of his heart only; he would also fulfil with strict fidelity those

external acts of public worship prescribed by the Law of Moses.

Another virtue which moved St. Joseph to journey every year to Jerusalem, there to adore the Lord in the Temple, was the virtue of piety, which has for its object the honor and respect due to parents and country. Together with this was the virtue of reverence, which commands honor and respect in regard to persons placed in high stations. Thus, while undertaking this journey every year, St. Joseph gave expression to sentiments of honor and respect toward his country, of which Jerusalem was the principal city; he likewise showed forth his affection toward his kinsmen who resided in that city, as well as his reverence and veneration for the priests of the Temple and the civil magistrates.

Behold how many acts of virtue St. Joseph exercised on this annual journey to Jerusalem. And for this reason the saintly Patriarch, in whose breast burned the undivided love of God, religion, country and parents, is well worthy of being set up as the model of a true Christian citizen, whose motto is fidelity to God, to his religion, to his parents and to his country.

* * *

As regards the acts of religion practised by St. Joseph, of which we have now spoken, we should note carefully the spirit of devotion that

moved him to perform the same. That spirit of inward devotion carried him, as it were, beyond himself, urging him to accomplish faithfully all that pertains to divine service and worship. To him, therefore, may be applied the words of Paralipomenon:[2] "And all the multitude offered victims and praises, with a devout mind."

The saintly Patriarch ever kept aglow this spirit of devotion, not only by frequently reflecting upon the heavenly mysteries of which he was the privileged witness, but also by having ever present before his eyes his own lowliness; this twofold element—consideration of God's greatness and reflection upon one's own baseness—being the source from which the spirit of devotion is ordinarily nurtured.

This inward devotion of St. Joseph, on the one hand, filled his heart with an habitual sentiment of gladness and of supernatural joy for the consideration of the divine goodness. But as, on the other hand, he realized that he was still upon this earth, which for him was a place of exile and trial, he could not but experience a certain feeling of sadness, which, however, was soon dissipated in his heart by the hope of enjoying before long the company and vision of his dear Lord in paradise.

[2] 2, Chap. xxix, 31.

Example

The Blessed Joseph Benedict Cottolengo

That remarkable friend of the poor and forsaken, Blessed Joseph Benedict Cottolengo, recently raised to the honors of the altar by Pope Benedict XV, of happy memory, gave origin in Turin, little less than a century ago, to that wonderful institution which is called "The Little Home of Divine Providence." This charitable servant of God fostered in his heart an unbounded confidence and a tender love toward the holy Mother of God and her chaste spouse St. Joseph. He was proud of bearing the name of the holy Patriarch, and often discoursed to those whom he received in his home, on his glories, pointing him out as the special protector of the dying, and exhorting all to have recourse to him in their wants and troubles. He would have his feast-day preceded by a devout novena, during which he himself preached every day, exalting the merits of St. Joseph and his power of intercession. On one occasion, a certain illustrious personage while assisting at a sermon preached by the saintly founder of the "Little-Home" was so struck by the sentiments of affection and piety with which he heard him recite the glories of the holy Patriarch, that he openly said he

could not remember having before heard anything so beautiful and devout.

To this glorious Patron, Blessed Cottolengo entrusted one of the divisions of his Home, namely, the group of youths whom he called "the little brothers," formed of young boys bereaved of their parents or abandoned by them, who therefore stood in greater need of protection and care.

The illustrious servant of God often experienced how generous St. Joseph is toward those who love to succor the poor. When at times he found himself in extreme need, St. Joseph was for him a protector who never failed to help him; nay, on several occasions even in an extraordinary and miraculous manner. The "Little Home of Divine Providence" had been founded by him without fixed income; however, help was never failing in time of need.

Once, as he had paid almost all his creditors at the end of the month, he found that he still owed the baker ten thousand francs. Being unable to pay that sum at once, he asked for an eight days' extension of time, which was granted. Meantime the pious Canon multiplied his prayers to St. Joseph, but seemingly without effect. On the eighth day he betook himself to a certain rich merchant, begging a loan of him for only ten days of the sum he owed the baker.

"Here are the ten thousand francs you ask for," the merchant said, "and I willingly lend them to you for ten days."—"Blessed be St. Joseph!" exclaimed Blessed Cottolengo. Then going straight to the baker, he said to him, carrying the purse to the counter: "Here I am in due time for the paying of my debt."—"But what do you mean, Canon," replied the baker with surprise, "do you wish to pay me twice? Only just now a man sent by you has paid me the ten thousand francs; see here the entry of the receipt is still fresh in my account book."—"I did not send anybody," replied the saintly Canon; "but certainly St. Joseph must have sent some one in my place." Without further ado Blessed Cottolengo retraced his steps to the merchant's home for the purpose of returning him the money. He told his creditor what had just happened, while handing over to him the ten thousand francs; but the merchant readily replied: "And do you think that I cannot give your Home ten thousand francs? Why, in this very moment I have gained as much more. I have no more right to money which has once been in your hands."

This was one of the many ways in which St. Joseph succored that great benefactor of the poor, Blessed Joseph Benedict Cottolengo.[3]

[3] Pietro Paolo Castaldi, *I prodigi della carità cristiana*, descritti nella Vita del Ven. Servo di Dio, *Giuseppe Benedetto Cottolengo*. —Ed. 4, Vol. II, pp. 436, 437, Torino, 1892.

Prayer

O glorious St. Joseph, who with such inward devotion didst perform all the duties regarding divine service and worship prescribed by the law, without at the same time omitting thy other duties both domestic and social, grant that, following in thy footsteps, while serving the Lord with our whole hearts, we may never neglect to fulfil our obligations toward those with whom we are connected with the bonds of country and blood. Amen.

Twenty-third Day

THE LOSS OF JESUS IN JERUSALEM

"And having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and His parents knew it not." (LUKE, II, 43.)

SORROW is the ordinary way by which God leads man to sanctification. It is not surprising, then, if the elect are not exempt from tribulation; nay, God at times permits that they be visited with afflictions even more severely than the rest of mankind. Wherefore, the angel said to Tobias: "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee."[1]

The holy Patriarch St. Joseph was indeed most dear to God, and so it was necessary that he also should undergo the most severe trials. Of these one of the hardest was without doubt the event which happened when the Holy Family journeyed to Jerusalem, Jesus being twelve years of age. When the time of their sojourn in the Holy City was ended, the Child Jesus, instead of returning home with His parents,

[1] Chap. XII, 13.

withdrew from their loving care and remained behind in Jerusalem without their knowing where He was.

The loss of the Divine Child happened without any fault on the part of either Mary or Joseph. For, as sacred interpreters explain, a custom prevailed among the Jews whereby the men were separated from the women in their processions or journeys to the Temple as well as during the time they remained in the Holy City, this course having been adopted as a safeguard on behalf of modesty and chastity. The children, not being bound by that law, were left free to be either in the company of their fathers or in that of their mothers.

Now, the Blessed Virgin could well presume that Jesus was with St. Joseph in the company of the men, while St. Joseph, in turn, could easily believe Him to be with Mary in the company of the women. The whole proceeding happened, therefore, through no want of care on the part of either parent of the Divine Child. Nor is it to be believed, as some have thought, that Jesus, on this occasion, rendered Himself invisible to His parents.

As a matter of fact, the event took place through divine disposition and for our instruction. For by thus withdrawing Himself from the tender care of Mary and Joseph and prolonging His sojourn in the Temple, Jesus

wished to teach us how the affection of parents should not prevent us from performing our spiritual duties, and also how we should not hesitate to sacrifice the company of those dear to us, in order entirely to consecrate ourselves to divine service.

* * *

Of all the sorrows experienced by St. Joseph, it may be said with truth that the one consequent on the loss of Jesus was the most bitter to his heart. Not that he had remorse of conscience for a fault which he certainly knew he had not committed; but the lack of information regarding the present state of one so dear to him as Jesus, filled him with unspeakable anguish. Hence, we may apply to him the words of the Psalmist: "Fear and trembling are come upon me."[2] We may even say that, in a certain sense, the sorrow of St. Joseph was greater than that experienced by Mary under the same circumstances, in so far as to St. Joseph principally the well-being of both Mother and Son had been entrusted by God.

Great had been the grief of the saintly Patriarch when, fleeing into Egypt and having to avoid the merciless soldiery of Herod, he was in continual anguish lest the Divine Child should be discovered and put to death, or at least, ill-treated by those godless emissaries of an am-

[2] Ps., LIV, 6.

bitious monarch. But he could then at least rejoice in the visible company of Jesus, whose presence rendered every hardship light and easy. Besides, he would have considered it a privilege to give his life for the Saviour. But now his beloved Son Jesus is absent, and oh! what anxiety, what torment of mind this is for the loving foster-father! His sorrow, too, was made keener by the thought of the misery of so many who, having lost divine grace through sin, are far from God, the only source of life and happiness.

It is true, the holy Patriarch well knew that the time for the immolation of Jesus upon the cross had not come as yet, since the seventy weeks of years foretold by the Prophet Daniel had not yet elapsed. Still, as he did not know all the circumstances of the passion, and on the other hand he was well aware of the malice of the Jews, his mind was troubled with the darkest forebodings for the safety of Jesus. A shadow, though faint and altogether inadequate, of the state of mind of St. Joseph is found in the wail of grief emitted once by Ruben, Jacob's son, upon being unable to find Joseph, whom his envious brothers had cast into a dry cistern: "The boy doth not appear, and whither shall I go?"[3]

* * *

[3] GEN., XXXVII, 30.

The circumstance of the loss of Jesus in Jerusalem gave St. Joseph an occasion of practising the virtue of fortitude to an heroic degree. The holy Patriarch bore the privation of the presence of Jesus, his sole consolation and the one joy of his heart, with greatest patience and resignation to the divine will.

The life of a Christian on earth is a continual warfare and therefore the virtue of fortitude is most necessary for each one of us. This virtue consists in a disposition of mind by which we firmly propose never to allow ourselves to be driven from the path of justice and truth whatever temptation we may encounter, or whatever hardship we may have to suffer. And certainly the loss of Jesus' presence and the uncertainty of His lot were among the greatest pains that St. Joseph could ever have experienced. However, he did not on this account allow himself to be driven to despair; but trusting in the assistance of Providence and accompanied by his holy spouse, who shared with him his cup of grief, he at once set out to find his foster Child Jesus, whose life was more precious and dear to him than all the possessions of earth.

Together with the virtue of fortitude, St. Joseph practised also patience and perseverance, teaching us hereby to strive to possess these Christian virtues, which help us to bear the

crosses and tribulations among which our lives are to be spent.

Example

ST. JOSEPH, TERROR OF DEMONS

Sacred writers agree in saying that the intercession of St. Joseph is an efficacious means of overthrowing the tyranny of Satan and propagating the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Indeed, this fact is borne out by numerous evidences, a result of which is that the holy Patriarch has come to be invoked by Holy Church with the title "terror of demons." Missionaries in heathen countries are unanimous in acknowledging the help they have derived from St. Joseph to that effect.

Words fail to express how baneful is the influence exercised by the wicked spirits over the poor infidels, in those regions where the beneficial and regenerating spirit of Christianity has not yet penetrated. The devil is not content with tormenting the souls of these unhappy people; he often afflicts their bodies as well, causing violent and mysterious maladies among them, which in many pagan countries are usually styled "the devil's sickness."

The Reverend Father Royer in his book on Catholic Missions recounts among other happenings the following episode. On the feast of

St. Joseph, that is, the 19th of March, he once met a workman of pagan religion, at whose wan and sickly aspect he could not repress a shudder. The unfortunate man was actually emaciated, and his color was that of death. At the missionary's question as to what ailed him, the man replied sadly that he suffered greatly and was very weak. He then begged the missionary to come to his aid.

The priest, perceiving that the patient was being afflicted with a sickness of an entirely special kind, told him accordingly that his malady was incurable, unless he should have recourse to the true God with a lively faith and promised to look after the salvation of his own soul with special care.—"Very well," the poor man replied, "I do believe. If God will cure me, many of my countrymen will also believe in Him; for they know that I have been tormented with this awful sickness for over two years."

The missionary, with a few appropriate words, encouraged the sick man to adhere steadfastly to the Catholic Faith, and, presenting him with a little prayer-book, recommended him to put his trust in the power and protection of St. Joseph. The converted pagan then left, promising to return five days later, that is, when the Church keeps the feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin. In fact, on the fixed day he came back to the missionary, beaming with

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joy and contentment, for in reality he had been cured.

On the fourth of April of the same year, the happy convert brought with him his eleven-year-old son, who already knew how to read his catechism, and invited the missionary to his home. The reader can imagine the joy of the priest when, upon arriving at the new Christian house, he learned that all that family were prepared to embrace the Faith and longed to receive holy Baptism. The missionary baptized the entire family, giving the youngest son the name of Joseph, in thanksgiving to the saintly Patriarch for the graces of which he had been the dispenser. These neophytes eventually became the nucleus of a new community of Christians, which spread rapidly throughout that region.

Thus, to the powerful intercession of our glorious Patriarch was due the cessation of the diabolical influence over that family as well as a wonderful propagation of the Faith in the aforesaid country.[4]

Prayer

I compassionate thee, O glorious St. Joseph, for the bitter sorrow that transfixed thy soul when, through no fault of thine, thou didst lose

[4] Ott, *Josephbuch*, pp. 209, 210.

sight of Jesus at the time He chose to remain in Jerusalem. Obtain for me, I beseech thee, through the merit which this saintly-borne anguish procured thee, that I may never lose my Saviour through mortal sin, but ever remain faithful to His holy grace. Amen.

Twenty-fourth Day

THE FINDING OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM IN THE MIDST OF DOCTORS

"And it came to pass that, after three days, they found Him (Jesus) *in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the Doctors, hearing them and asking them questions."* (LUKE, II, 46.)

GREAT indeed was the sorrow of Mary and Joseph when, returning to their home after the Paschal feast, they discovered toward the close of the first day that they had lost Jesus. But when on the third day they found Him again, the joy they experienced fully made up for their fears and anxieties.

This joy, however, was intended by God to be a reward for their special diligence in searching for Jesus. In fact, the Sacred Text tells us that, as soon as they became aware of the absence of their dear Son, they sought Him among their parents and kinsfolk without losing a moment's time. But the Divine Saviour was not to be found in the midst of His earthly relatives nor in the tumult of the world, as He Him-

self said:[1] "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" To be certain of finding Jesus, it is necessary to withdraw from the world, to bid farewell to earthly affections, to hasten to the house of God and have recourse to the ministers of the sanctuary. There we may be sure of finding Jesus if, through mortal sin, we have come to lose Him, or if, for some purpose unknown to us, He at times seems to withdraw Himself from our souls, depriving us of the light of His presence and of the balm of His spiritual consolations.

Although free from every stain of sin, Mary and Joseph had to pass through the hardest trial to which God, by a just disposition of His will, may ever submit His own faithful servants. This trial consists in the withdrawal of those consolations, lights and comforts which the presence of divine grace usually brings along with it. During those three days, Mary and Joseph experienced all the grief, all the sadness and anxiety which are the ordinary accompaniment of spiritual dryness. God had ordained that it should be so to the end that those two saintly persons might have greater compassion on us, if ever it should happen that He, with or without any fault on our part, chooses to deprive us of His sensible presence

[1] *Ibid.*, 49.

and leaves us, as it were, abandoned to ourselves.

On such occasions, however, we should imitate the parents of Jesus, who did not abandon themselves to despair; but rather, groping along as it were in the gloomy night of tribulation, they diligently searched for Him who was the love of their souls.[2] Let us likewise seek Jesus in prayer and penance, with humility and constancy, and we shall be certain of finding Him, as it is written: [3] "Thou, O Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee."

* * *

It would be impossible to describe the joy of St. Joseph upon finding in the Temple at Jerusalem Him whom he loved as a son, whom he had, it is true, always possessed in his heart, but whose visible presence filled him now with a joy as great as was the sorrow caused by the separation. And as the sorrow of Mary during the three days' loss had been the cause of new sorrow for the holy Patriarch, so now, seeing the joy of his beloved spouse, he felt his own joy increasing a hundredfold. He now was inexpressibly happy to have found again the sacred Treasure entrusted to his care. He exulted to see Jesus so greatly honored by the Doctors of the law, who invited Him to sit in their midst

[2] Cant., III, 1.
[3] Psalm, IX, 11.

and allowed Him to freely put questions to them. It caused him inexpressible joy to hear Jesus answering those wise men in such a sublime manner that they were all filled with admiration at His wisdom.

Oh! with what effusion did St. Joseph press to his bosom his beloved Jesus, in whom he did not know what to admire more, the greatness of the divine goodness which abode in Him substantially, or the immense tenderness and mercy of His most sacred Heart, which was pouring out its treasures of knowledge and grace upon men, as a prelude of that copious redemption which He was to procure to the world and which one day would change the face of the earth!

Oh, then, indeed, could St. Joseph say with even greater truth than the Spouse of the Canticles: "My Beloved to me, and I to Him." [4] "I found Him whom my soul loveth; I held Him and will not let Him go." [5]

* * *

The fact of losing Jesus in the Temple and finding Him again after three days, considerably increased in St. Joseph's heart that pity which he spontaneously felt for poor sinners and for persons suffering from desolation and dryness. This virtue of pity, which is but an offshoot of charity, St. Joseph had received from

[4] CANT., II, 16.
[5] *Ibid.*, III, 4.

God in a special manner from the first moment of his sanctification, and it ever continued growing in his soul, so that to him are applicable the words of Job:[6] "For from my infancy mercy grew up with me, and it came out with me from my mother's womb."

Now, then, that St. Joseph experienced how baneful for the soul is the separation from Jesus and what a trial it is to be deprived of the sweetness of His presence, he began to conceive an immense compassion for all those who have the misfortune of losing Jesus through sin, or who are visited with dryness of spirit or troubled by grievous and distressing temptations.

This tender compassion for the tempted and afflicted grew so much stronger in St. Joseph as he then had under his eyes a wonderful example of this same virtue in his holy spouse, Mary, who, almost forgetting her own grief during those three terrible days, had principally in mind the sorrow of the holy Patriarch. This may be inferred from the observation which she uttered when she finally found Jesus: "Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing."[7] By mentioning St. Joseph in the first place, the Blessed Virgin wished to signify

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[6] Chap., XXXI, 18.
[7] LUKE, II, 48.

how much the grief of her holy spouse had weighed upon her own heart.

Example

ST. JOSEPH OF THE OAK TREE

A mission was once being given in a little country village named Villadieu in the diocese of Angers, France, in May, 1856. The missionary who preached it was a priest of the Society of Jesus, called Father Louis N. As the mission was brought to a close, the parish priest took the missionary to a place outside the village, to show him a marvelous oak tree of extraordinary height and shape, the girth of which was fifty-four feet. While the missionary was wondering at the proportions of the stately old oak, it occurred to him that it would be quite appropriate to place an image of St. Joseph in a kind of large niche which nature had hollowed out in the tree itself. Accordingly, he suggested this to the parish priest, who fully agreed with him.

Until that time the niche had served no other purpose than that of protecting wayfarers against the inclemency of the weather. Now, however, acting upon the missioner's suggestion, the parish priest determined to adjust it into a small chapel to be dedicated in honor of

the great Patriarch St. Joseph. The family to whom the tree belonged, as well as the diocesan authorities, willingly gave their consent and the work was soon begun. A small altar with a tabernacle was placed there, and above in the niche a statue of St. Joseph. Soon after, the Holy Sacrifice was celebrated in that place, while a hundred priests and more than a thousand pilgrims were fervently calling upon the help and assistance of the chaste spouse of the Immaculate Mother of God, invoking him with the title "St. Joseph of the Oak Tree, pray for us."

The news of the dedication of the strange chapel spread rapidly throughout the country. The spot began soon after to be the center of numerous pilgrimages, and the Holy Sacrifice was offered daily in the new sanctuary. One day more than thirty thousand pilgrims assembled from various parts, joining themselves with the inhabitants of the village, to praise St. Joseph and invoke his powerful intercession in the trials of life. It would be difficult to say what fervent prayers ascended to the throne of the glorious Patriarch from that modest sanctuary. And no wonder that Heaven rewarded the piety of the faithful with extraordinary graces both spiritual and temporal!

Pope Pius IX, in a Brief of June 23, 1857,

enriched this shrine with copious indulgences, which made the Sanctuary even more dear to the faithful of that region. As a result, it was soon found necessary to build a chapel, in order that the pilgrims might satisfy their devotion by approaching the holy sacraments. True, the money for this end was lacking; but the generosity of both inhabitants and pilgrims was more than equal to the occasion, and the chapel was soon erected. But even this became inadequate; whereupon it gave place to a church, which is the present shrine of "St. Joseph of the Oak Tree."

Pilgrims journey to this hallowed spot not only from Angers and the surrounding country, but also from Brittany, Normandy and even Belgium and Holland. Every year, from sixty to eighty thousand strangers visit the shrine, and more than seven hundred Masses are celebrated there. Not a day passes in which the Sanctuary is not visited by some new pilgrim, although the pilgrimages are more numerous at the time of the principal feast, which occurs in August, when all those who have requests to make to St. Joseph, as well as those who have already received favors, come to pay the homage of their filial devotion to the glorious Patriarch, who never fails to answer their prayers.

Prayer

O glorious St. Joseph, by the ineffable joy that filled thy heart upon finding thy foster Son Jesus in the Temple, have pity upon my soul; comfort me in sadness, protect me in dangers, and if ever I should happen to lose the grace of Jesus through sin, oh! then, help me to quickly recover it by sincere penance. Amen.

Twenty-fifth Day

LIFE OF ST. JOSEPH AT NAZARETH IN THE COMPANY OF JESUS AND MARY

"And (Jesus) *went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them."*
(LUKE, II, 51.)

FEW indeed are the words in which the inspired writer describes the life of St. Joseph at Nazareth in the company of Jesus and Mary. But brief as these words are, they can convey to us, if they be attentively considered, an idea of the holy Patriarch's high office here on earth, and of the abundance of grace which filled his soul during these years spent in the little town of Galilee. The idea conveyed by the Sacred Text is that of an intimate union of heart and mind among the members of the Holy Family. In very truth there could not possibly be a closer bond than that uniting Joseph to his foster Son Jesus and to his most loving spouse Mary.

The Word of God when becoming Man made Himself subject to the laws of nature regarding the relations of son to father. He chose

to fulfill toward St. Joseph, His foster-father, all the duties of a faithful son, showing him every mark of honor and affection due to a parent. Besides this, there burned unceasingly in the most sacred Heart of Jesus a fond love for St. Joseph, such as the most devoted of sons never has had or never will have for the tenderest of earthly fathers. And when the holy Patriarch, having become feeble in health, could no longer undergo the fatigue of his humble trade as a carpenter, then Jesus assisted him with tender solicitude, sweetly constraining him to take a well-deserved rest, anticipating his wishes, and supplying his needs.

Mary, on her part, showed St. Joseph all the signs of respect, veneration and affection due by a faithful wife to a loving husband. For indeed St. Joseph was to her a true spouse, given her by God to be her companion in sorrow, the witness of her divine maternity and the guardian of her perpetual virginity.

St. Joseph, on his part, responded to this love and veneration of both Jesus and Mary for him with feelings of reciprocal affection and regard. He had for Jesus a true fatherly love, such as had been enkindled and was kept aglow in his heart by the Holy Spirit. So ardent was this love, that could it be divided among all the fathers that have ever lived in this world, it would be sufficient to render their sons su-

premely happy. As for his most holy spouse, Joseph could not cease to admire the operations of grace in her soul; and this consideration caused the chaste and holy love which he had consecrated to her on the day of their espousal to grow stronger every day.

A true vision of paradise is offered us by that Holy House of Nazareth, all radiant with the light of divine charity. Where charity and love are, there God also is.[1]

* * *

The Holy House of Nazareth, besides giving us an example of a most peaceful home in which charity reigns supreme, furnishes us also with the edifying spectacle of perfect harmony existing in the midst of the greatest diversities of conditions. Jesus was true God and sovereign Lord of all creation; Mary, His true Mother, was the Queen of angels and men: and, notwithstanding, both Jesus and Mary were subject to Joseph. From Jesus, the source of every good, Joseph had received all the abundance of grace that he possessed, and he had received it precisely through Mary, the Mediatrix of the human race; and yet both Jesus and Mary were dependent upon the orders and dispositions of St. Joseph in their regard.

In fact, St. Joseph's office was to be Almighty

[1] Office of the *"Mandatum"* on Maunday Thursday.

God's earthly representative and, as it were, His agent in the Holy Family. To him were imparted in a direct way the divine orders, which he in turn communicated to Mary and Jesus. To St. Joseph pertained the management of all the temporal affairs of the little household. He decided what was to be done, and determined the course to be followed.

Thus did the King and Queen of Heaven submit themselves freely to every disposition of St. Joseph. Jesus and Mary were indeed superior to him in dignity and grace, Jesus being God and Mary the Mother of God, and therefore neither were bound in strict duty to obey the command of the holy Patriarch. Nevertheless, both conformed their wills to his, faithfully acquiescing in his every wish and disposition.

Admire, O Christian soul, on the one hand the profound humility of the God Man and of His Mother, and on the other, the unspeakable dignity of St. Joseph.

* * *

Holy Scripture is silent regarding the precise number of years spent by St. Joseph in the little House at Nazareth in the company of Jesus and Mary. But whatever that number of years may have been, we may well say that innumerable were the graces which this holy

companionship brought to the soul of the saintly Patriarch. Disposed as he was to love God ever more and more, and seeking, as it were instinctively, the things that belonged to divine service and worship, St. Joseph could not but derive fresh advantages from his intimate and continual contact with the Word Made Flesh.

The nearer one draws to a fountain, the more abundantly may he derive water from it. In St. Joseph's case this was particularly true; for Jesus loved him more than any other creature after Mary, His Mother, and the love of Jesus is the channel through which all graces come to us. Mary, too, loved St. Joseph more than any other person, after her Son Jesus; and, so, in her prayers the first object she ever recommended to the Heavenly Father was her virginal spouse; and who can realize the power of Mary's prayer over the Heart of God?

On the other hand, it is a fact that the conversation and example of holy people have a special efficacy in attracting us to virtue and piety. What incentive, then, must the examples of virtue and sanctity given to St. Joseph by his foster Son Jesus and his beloved spouse Mary have been for his advancement in virtue!

Example

DEVOTION OF THE PEOPLE OF BOLOGNA TO THE MOST CHASTE SPOUSE OF MARY

A true and sincere devotion to the Mother of God usually leads the soul to foster a tender devotion also to her holy spouse St. Joseph. This is particularly shown in the case of the people of Bologna, who, given as they were from very ancient times to the services of the Blessed Virgin, distinguished themselves among other peoples of Italy by their zeal in promoting the honor of the foster-father of Jesus, the glorious St. Joseph.

As far back as the first half of the twelfth century, that is to say, when devotion to the holy Patriarch was still in its infancy in the West, there was, as Pope Benedict XIV tells us, a parish church at Bologna dedicated to St. Joseph. This church was given over to the Order of the Servants of Mary in the year 1305.

Hardly had these Religious come into possession of this church, than they set themselves to promote devotion to the holy spouse of Mary. Not only had they at heart the continuance of the practises of devotion established there many years previously in his honor, but they also strove with indefatigable zeal to honor him by extolling his virtues from the pulpit and cele-

brating his feast with special splendor. It is further assured that in this church precisely St. Bernardine of Siena delivered that famous sermon in St. Joseph's honor which is often quoted as the most remarkable piece of Josephine literature of that epoch.

The servants of Mary had the care of this church until the time of Pope St. Pius V, when this Pontiff ordered the nuns of St. Dominic to move from their convent situated outside the city gates, to this Servite monastery, giving the Servants of Mary instead the convent and church of the Dominican nuns. Such, however, was the devotion of the Servants of Mary to St. Joseph, that they asked and obtained permission from the Pope to transfer the title of St. Joseph to their new church. This concession enabled them to continue those exercises of devotion which they had been accustomed to practise in their former church in honor of the holy Patriarch.

Every year on the 19th of March, the feast of our glorious Saint was solemnized with great splendor in this Sanctuary, which is now found within the city walls. On the afternoon of the same day a civil festival usually took place, consisting of public games and illuminations. From this we may infer what prominence the feast of the Saint was given in Bologna, since such pro-

ceedings were wont to take place only on occasions of great solemnity.

We may further note how deeply rooted the devotion of St. Joseph was in the hearts of the people of that city, from the fact that they used to invoke him publicly in the Litany of the Saints. In this they anticipated the decree of Pope Benedict XIII, who first extended this practise to the Universal Church.

Furthermore, in an Office, the origin of which may be ascribed to the fifteenth century, the following beautiful invocation to St. Joseph was wont to be read by the members of a confraternity of laymen likewise in Bologna: "O happy Guardian and Spouse of the Queen of virgins: to whom was entrusted the care of Jesus, the Lord of all creation; thou who reignest in the blissful company of the Saints, cease not to intercede for us to the Father of lights, that we may forever enjoy eternal light."

In the course of time, the people of Bologna were most zealous in propagating this touching devotion to the holy Patriarch, endeavoring to make it more widespread by erecting numerous churches and establishing oratories with their respective confraternities in his honor. Although other cities in Italy, as elsewhere, claim to have acknowledged as their Patron the glorious Patriarch, it may be said that the city of St. Petronio, for so Bologna is called, may justly

be proud of having the first place among all the cities of the West in the practise of this wholesome devotion.[2]

Prayer

O glorious St. Joseph, as it was for thee a source of consolation to live intimately with Jesus and Mary at Nazareth, so also great were the treasures of grace brought to thy soul by this close association. Grant, I beseech thee, that I may always endeavor to be an occasion of good example to my neighbor, never failing, as far as I may, to imitate the good I find in others, in order that the grace of Jesus may continually increase in my soul. Amen.

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[2] Giovanni Crisostomo Trombelli, *Life and Devotion of St. Joseph*, Bologna. 1767, P. II, p. 241, and foll.

Twenty-sixth Day

ST. JOSEPH IN THE WORKSHOP AT NAZARETH

"Is not this (Jesus) *the carpenter's son?"*
"Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary?"
(MATT. XIII, 5; MARK, VI, 3.)

HOLY SCRIPTURE tells us that the chaste spouse of Mary, as also the Incarnate Word, devoted their time at Nazareth to the exercise of a profession which indeed does not rank among the liberal arts, but among servile trades; such being the work of a carpenter, in which manual rather than mental skill is required. Now, it was not without a special disposition of Divine Providence that both Joseph and his foster Son spent their days in such a lowly occupation.

The first object God had in view in so ordering was, by this means, to set an example and give encouragement to the poor and the working classes. It was principally for the poor, who compose the greater part of mankind, that Jesus Christ came upon earth, according to these words: "The spirit of the Lord is upon Me:

wherefore He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor."[1]

God, then, had ordained that the holy Patriarch St. Joseph should be engaged in a kind of work common to the poor people, that so Jesus Christ Himself might ennoble it by inheriting it from His earthly father and freely embracing the same. Thus does our blessed Lord teach us that for the humbler class of workmen He has in reserve His choicest graces, provided, however, they live content in the place and degree assigned them here below. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."[2]

Furthermore, Our Lord came down from heaven to give us an example of that virtue which is most pleasing to Him; namely, holy humility. Accordingly, He chose for His earthly surroundings not the courts of princes nor the halls of the learned, but a little unknown workshop at Nazareth. This lowly workshop was for many years the witness of the humble and hidden toiling of the God-Man. Were those holy walls able to speak, what wonderful acts of the deepest humility would they disclose to us as practised within them by Jesus and His foster-father!

The life of a laborer, provided it be in con-

[1] Luke, iv. 18.
[2] Matt., v, 3.

formity with the dictates of faith, is not less dignified nor less suited to prayer and contemplation than any other sort of life. In fact, whilst the hands are occupied with manual work, the mind can easily turn to God and commune with Him, and the heart can beg of Him the graces of which it stands in need. Thus it was that Jesus, while engaged in the company of Joseph in manual labor, never ceased to recommend the welfare of the world to His Eternal Father. At the same time He instructed His foster-father in the mysteries of virtue and grace, raising him to the highest degree of contemplation.

* * *

The kind of work to which St. Joseph devoted his time in the workshop at Nazareth offered him frequent occasions of developing in himself the spirit of humility and union with God, according to the example and instructions he there received from his foster Son, who was at the same time his Divine Master. Meanwhile, the carpenter's avocation afforded him special motives for spiritual joy, which joy, however, was mingled with a sense of keen sorrow.

For while engaged in fashioning the various specimens of his trade, the holy Patriarch was ever being reminded of the greatness and majesty of God, who, as a most wise Architect, formed this vast universe with wonderful skill and incomprehensible power and repaired the

damage caused by sin with a benevolence equal to His greatness.

On the other hand, the very material on which St. Joseph worked was continually for him a fresh source of sorrow. In fact, the rough wood which he handled kept ever present before his mind the thought of that tree that was even then growing somewhere on the mountains of Judea, and which was soon to be felled to afford the Son of Man a bed, alas! hard and painful, from which He would make good at the price of His blood the evils caused by the misuse of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil planted in the midst of Paradise: "By the wood we were made whole, and by the Holy Cross we are freed: the fruit of the tree seduced us, the Son of God has redeemed us."[3]

* * *

The labors of St. Joseph in the workshop at Nazareth, besides furnishing him with fresh motives of admiration for the Creator of the world, and of heartfelt compassion for the future sufferings of the God-Man, had also the effect of strengthening his faith and making him grow in the practise of this all-important virtue which is justly called the root and foundation of our justification. Faith consists in a firm adherence of our mind to revealed truth, for which purpose

[3] Second antiphon of the third Nocturn for the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

God never fails to supply us with sufficient motives in order to induce us to steadfastly believe His word.

Now, the mystery of the Incarnation had been revealed to St. Joseph, who firmly believed that the saintly Youth working beside him was truly God. On the other hand, the wisdom which he saw his foster Son display in His speech, while He had not frequented any school but had only attended to the duties of His trade, was for the holy Patriarch, as it also should have been for his fellow citizens, sufficient evidence of the divine origin of His science. He believed, then, firmly in the divinity of that young Man who called him by the endearing title of father. The light of divine faith that ever illumined his mind, did not grow faint as he saw Jesus engaged in so lowly and humble an occupation as that of a carpenter.

Example

THE SANCTUARY OF "ST. JOSEPH OF GOOD HOPE"

At a short distance from the celebrated Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin of Le Puy in France, is a no less famous shrine known by the name of "St. Joseph of Good Hope." Its origin was as humble and unpretentious as its subsequent development was rapid and glorious.

In a small village named Espaly, which had been built among the ruins of an ancient castle of the same name, in France, there lived toward the middle of the last century two pious women linked together by holy friendship. They were poor, indeed, in the goods of this world, but rich in those of heaven. One of these, named Séjalon, dwelt by herself in one of the numerous grottoes formed among the ruins of the dilapidated castle. The other, Anne Mary Buffet, likewise an humble peasant woman, also worked out a scanty livelihood by manual labor.

It happened that one day, Anne Mary Buffet having accidentally come across a little picture of St. Joseph along the road to Puy, picked it up and inserted it in her prayer-book. She then chanced to meet her friend and showed her the picture; whereupon, both being moved by a sentiment of veneration for the glorious Patriarch, they decided to place the picture in one of the niches formed by the rock among the ruins of the above-mentioned castle. There they would meet morning and evening and pour forth prayers in honor of St. Joseph.

At first they brought with them some of the little girls of the village to pray before the picture; these were soon followed by their mothers. After some time they substituted for the picture a small statue of the Saint, which they placed upon an altar, and decorated it as best they

could. These were the humble beginnings of what was soon to become a celebrated Sanctuary.

In a short time the piety of these good women was amply rewarded, for the holy Patriarch soon answered the prayers of his devout clients, enriching them with graces and favors. The modest grotto was soon transformed into a devout oratory, and a number of votive lamps were hung there by the faithful in token of gratitude.

In the course of time one of the two devout women lent her services as guardian of the little Sanctuary. However, not content with that, she gave up her small chamber for the service of the Sanctuary, which later became a center of numerous works of piety and beneficence, to the spiritual and also temporal advantage of the inhabitants of the village.

For the convenience of the numerous pilgrims who daily journeyed there even from distant regions, it was found necessary to erect a church where divine service might be held and the pilgrims might approach the sacraments. Finally, a gigantic statue of St. Joseph was erected on the summit of the mountain near by, before an immense assemblage of devout faithful, and solemnly blessed on April 11, 1910. This was meant to be a special sign of love on the part of the clients of St. Joseph who had contributed

to the erection of the monument. It was also a lasting token of the powerful intercession of him whom the Church honors as Head of the Holy Family.

God, whose marvelous works often have but humble beginnings, had designed thus to reward the piety of those two lowly women, at the same time opening for many a treasure of grace in the now celebrated Sanctuary of "St Joseph of Good Hope." [4]

Prayer

O glorious St. Joseph, by virtue of those immense merits which thou didst acquire in the humble workshop at Nazareth, obtain for me, I implore thee, the grace ever to be content with the position, however lowly, in which it may please Divine Providence that I should abide. Grant me also never "to be ashamed of the Gospel," [5] and not to waver in my faith, regardless of the calumnies which may be directed against it by unbelievers. Amen.

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[4] See "Le petit missionaire de Saint Joseph et de la famille de Nazareth," a monthly publication. Le Puy-en-Velay, France, 1911.
[5] Rom., I, 16.

Twenty-seventh Day

THE HAPPY DEATH OF ST. JOSEPH

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord: from henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, for their works follow them." (Apoc. xiv, 13.)

WE MAY well believe that St. Joseph was not once in his life guilty of the least actual sin. Nevertheless, he was not exempt from the miseries and sufferings inherent in our fallen nature and which are the penalty of the sin of our first parents. Hence he experienced, like all other men, hunger and thirst, weariness, the inconveniences of heat and cold, and other such trials common to all mankind. He was also subject, as we ourselves are, to the infirmities of the body which weaken it, and sooner or later lead us to death. Therefore, after having spent several years at Nazareth with Jesus and Mary, the saintly Patriarch was seized with a mortal sickness, and being lovingly attended by his holy spouse and his foster Son, he peacefully breathed forth his soul into the hands of his Lord and Creator.

A death more calm and peaceful than that of the glorious Patriarch St. Joseph cannot be imagined. Ecclesiastical writers term it rather a passing away or *transitus,* which word is also used with reference to our blessed Lady's death. For many years St. Joseph had devoted his life to the care of Jesus and Mary. He had loved them with a most genuine love and served them with total self-forgetfulness. He had procured them all the necessaries of life by untiring labor and solicitous forethought. He had consoled them in sorrow and protected them at the cost of his life from the perils put in their path by the devil and by men. And now that he was breathing forth his soul, could it be that Jesus and Mary would abandon him?

Certainly not. On the contrary, they stood by him in his last moments, lovingly and attentively lending him whatever assistance was needed, consoling him with kind and comforting words and listening with complacency to the expressions of intense love for God that were issuing from his lips. Finally, they offered their merits together with the sufferings of the saintly Patriarch before the throne of the Divine Majesty.

A saint whose life was wholly inflamed with divine love could not but die of love. True, the many occupations of the present life had prevented him from loving his foster Son Jesus

with that continuous intensity he would have desired. But now that his labors were at an end and he could foresee the day when he would unceasingly love God in the beatific vision, nothing remained for him but to say to the Eternal Father: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do," [1] and to the Son: "As Thy heavenly Father gave Thy body into my hands on the day on which Thou camest into this world, so I, on this day of my departure from this world, do commit my spirit into Thine own divine hands." [2]

* * *

Though we do not exactly know the time at which the holy Patriarch left this world, we may, however, from a close study of the Sacred Text, deduce that he died some time before the passion of our divine Saviour.

His mission was then accomplished. He had been entrusted with the care of assisting the Messias in His youth and of bearing Him company in His hidden life. He had followed, at least for some time, the labors and fatigues of the Redeemer during His public life. We may believe that God, in His love for the foster-father of His Son, wished to spare him the painful sight of the passion and death of Jesus.

God, then, had decreed that for over thirty

[1] JOHN, XVII, 4.
[2] St. FRANCIS DE SALES. *Treatise on the Love of God.* Book VII. Chap. XIII.

years St. Joseph should enjoy the company of Jesus and Mary, in order that he might perfect himself in virtue according to their image and resemblance. And when He found the holy Patriarch sufficiently advanced in grace and holiness, He rewarded him with a well-deserved repose. Indeed, God has appointed for each of His elect a fixed time of trial and sorrow as well as a certain measure of merit to be filled by them, and death does not come until both are complete.

It is commonly believed that St. Joseph died in Jerusalem, whither he had journeyed with Jesus and Mary to adore the Lord in the Temple, as was his custom, on the occasion of the Paschal feast. God had thus decreed that the sacred remains of the holy Patriarch should be interred near those of his forefathers in the valley of Josaphat, a privilege greatly appreciated by the Hebrews. This could not have taken place had St. Joseph died at Nazareth, for the means of the Holy Family, as we may well believe, were too scanty to permit transporting the holy Patriarch's body from Galilee to Jerusalem.

These considerations should move us to thank and praise our Heavenly Father for the infinite bounty and wisdom with which He disposes everything for the good of His children.

* * *

God, whose mercy is infinite and who always amply rewards what we do for Him, was not content to recompense St. Joseph's fidelity in His service by granting him the grace of a happy death in the arms of Jesus and Mary. He willed furthermore that the holy Patriarch's body should not remain long in the sepulcher, but that it should soon rise to everlasting life. We read in St. Matthew that on the morning of the Pasch there rose with Jesus "many bodies of the saints that had slept." [3] Now, we may hold with moral certainty that among these was also the body of the foster-father of Jesus. He rose, not to die again, but to follow Christ triumphantly to heaven on the day of His glorious ascension.

St. Joseph merited this singular favor by his unwavering fidelity in assisting and at all times protecting Jesus and Mary. It was also a just recompense for the special care by which he ever preserved his body and soul free from even the slightest taint of impurity. Wherefore, as it is said of the ancient Joseph that "his bones were visited, and after death they prophesied," [4] that is, were transferred religiously from Egypt into the land of Chanaan, according as he had predicted, we may well hold that the body of St. Joseph, of whom the ancient Joseph was but

[3] Chap., XXVII; 52, 53.
[4] ECCLUS., XLIX, 18.

a figure, was restored to life through Christ's power, to be transferred to heaven, impassible, immortal, subtile and glorious on the day of Christ's ascension, there to reign with Him eternally.

Example

ST. JOSEPH PROTECTOR OF THE DYING

One of the greatest saints raised up by God in these latter times to honor the Church and edify the faithful is without a doubt St. Alphonsus Liguori. Not only did this holy Doctor strive with indefatigable zeal to propagate devotion to the Blessed Mother of God, but he also endeavored to inculcate in others a strong feeling of confidence in the patronage of the foster-father of Jesus. In this respect he says, among other things, that the whole world acknowledges St. Joseph as the advocate of the dying, and this for three reasons: first, because being loved by Jesus not only as a friend but as a father, he possesses in heaven a power of intercession greater than that of other saints; secondly, because he has special power over the demons who attack us on our death-bed, this privilege having been given him in recompense for the fact that he preserved the life of Jesus from the impious designs of Herod; thirdly, because of the assistance rendered him

by Jesus and Mary at the hour of his death. For these reasons, concludes the holy Doctor, St. Joseph has received the privilege of obtaining for his devout clients the inestimable grace of a holy and peaceful death in the sight of the Lord. Hence, we should not wonder if he always obtains the grace of a happy death for his devoted clients, provided they ask for it with confidence and perseverance.

There lived once in Venice a knight who was particularly devout to St. Joseph. Out of love for the holy Patriarch he was in the habit of giving generous alms, of frequently visiting the Saint's churches, and of decorating his altars. In short, he would lose no opportunity of showing forth his affection and reverence for his glorious patron.

One day he was taken seriously ill and was in great danger of dying. Unfortunately, being overmuch attached to life instead of providing for the welfare of his soul, he seemed to think of nothing but the recovery of his bodily health. The illness, however, grew worse, to the point that death now was imminent. Yet he expressed no wish of going to confession, and, what is worse, his friends and relatives, fearing lest they might frighten him, would not advise him of the danger in which he lay. Thus it is that earthly friendship often proves real cruelty.

However, what this knight's relatives and worldly friends would not do, the merciful St. Joseph himself did. He appeared to the dying man in a dream, informed him of his serious condition, and bade him receive the holy sacraments as soon as possible. The poor sick man followed the advice of his heavenly advocate, and received the last rites of the Church with deep sorrow and many tears. Shortly afterward he surrendered his spirit to Almighty God through the hands of his advocate St. Joseph. In such a manner does a true devotion to the holy Patriarch often obtain for the dying the grace of final repentance and perseverance.[5]

Prayer

O glorious St. Joseph, what an enviable lot was thine, to have been deemed worthy to expire in the very arms of Jesus and Mary, and shortly after thy death to have risen with Christ. Assist me, I implore thee, in my last agony, with thy presence, so that I may deserve to reign with thee forever in heaven with soul and body. Amen.

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[5] Isidorus De Isolanis, *Summa de donis S. Joseph*, p. 291.

Twenty-eighth Day

THE EXCEEDING GREAT GLORY OF ST. JOSEPH IN HEAVEN

"For the fruit of good labors is glorious, and the root of wisdom never faileth."

(Wis., iii, 15.)

FAITH teaches that the reward promised by God to those who serve Him faithfully is in proportion to the merits acquired upon earth. If, then, we would know what degree of glory was awarded to St. Joseph on his entering into heaven, we must first endeavor to form an estimate of the merits he acquired during his mortal life. Now, that these merits were great indeed, is easily perceived when we consider the importance of the offices with which Almighty God entrusted him, and especially when we recall the fervor with which he performed each and every one.

True, the evangelists relate only a few of the good deeds accomplished by St. Joseph, but these are of such importance and suppose so many conditions, that they are sufficient to give an idea, inadequate though it be, of the great-

ness of his merits. In fact, what can be imagined more grand, sublime or meritorious than to have had the office of guardian of the God-Man Himself and the care of defending Him against the enemies of His life, actually protecting Him in the midst of the many dangers which surrounded Him? Again, what sacrifices, what privations of every kind, what fears, what anxieties the fulfilling of such a mission actually entailed! It is not too much to say that the Redemption through the sacrifice of the cross became a possibility owing to the faithfulness of St. Joseph in guarding our divine Lord and preserving His life from the fury of Herod. Thus did St. Joseph coöperate in the working of the great mystery of our salvation, and, accordingly, he may be said to have shared, in a certain sense, the merits of the Redeemer of the world.

The merits of St. Joseph should not be measured only by the greatness and importance of his works but, as has been said, we should principally take into account the fervor with which he entered upon and brought his duties to completion. The heart of the holy Patriarch was a blazing furnace ever aglow with an ardent love of Jesus, for whom he would have willingly suffered a thousand times as much, had the divine will so ordained. Again, the fact that the sacred Person of Jesus was the

direct object of St. Joseph's care contributed to augment his merits. If works of mercy done by us are worthy of supernatural reward in so far as we perform them for the love of Jesus mystically present in our neighbor, how much more precious in the eyes of God must have been the works of the holy Patriarch, the immediate object of whose charity being Jesus Himself, the source of all charity!

We praise and bless thee, O great St. Joseph, for the many merits thou didst acquire in life, fulfilling in all things the holy will of God. Oh, would that I also might conform myself entirely to the dispositions of this most just, high and lovable will, to the end that I might be worthy to enjoy eternal happiness with thee in heaven!

* * *

There was great rejoicing in the court of heaven when the Divine Saviour forty days after His resurrection, ascended triumphantly into heaven, bringing with Him, as trophies of His victory, the souls of the just, liberated from Limbo, together with those saints who had risen with Him from the sepulcher on Easter morning. Foremost among these was St. Joseph, who, standing at the right hand of Jesus, was led by Him to occupy a place which, with the sole exception of that destined for his most holy spouse, was the highest in heaven.

Oh, what a grand reception was made for the

holy Patriarch by the angelic choirs, and how the happy multitude of the saints who entered with him into paradise joined in the general exultation! How they rejoiced in beholding the foster-father of Jesus raised to so high a degree of glory, and how they were overwhelmed with pleasure on knowing that as St. Joseph was joined on earth to Mary by the close bonds of holy marriage, so now he was to occupy a magnificent throne in heaven beside that prepared for his beloved spouse!

Supremely happy in the vision of the Divine Essence, and happy, likewise, in contemplating the first fruits of the Redemption, St. Joseph saw his every desire satisfied, and he could now rest in the full possession of his joy. This joy as an infinite abyss totally enveloped and invested him, according to the words of St. Paul: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." [1]

* * *

Among the special motives for the joy that St. Joseph now has in heaven must be mentioned, in the first place, the recollection of the sorrow which he patiently bore in his earthly life for the love of Jesus. The holy Patriarch cannot be called a martyr in the strict sense of

[1] 1 Cor., II, 9.

the word, since he did not actually suffer death for Christ. Notwithstanding, he was a martyr in the mystical sense of the word, on account of the great anxieties he patiently endured for the sake of Jesus and Mary.

The thought, too, of having contributed to the propagation of the Faith both by sedulously guarding Jesus "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession,"[2] and by manifesting in some way His divinity to the shepherds, to the Magi, to the Egyptians and to his own countrymen, is for him now in heaven a source of special consolation.

Another secondary cause of happiness for St. Joseph in the celestial court is the fact of his perpetual virginity, which he had promised to God by vow and which he most carefully observed throughout his whole life. Indeed, if there be a saint in heaven to whom is due the aureola of virgins, it is certainly St. Joseph, who, crowned by Jesus Himself, now presides over that happy band of holy souls which have despised the pleasures of sense and led an angelic life in the frailty of the flesh, "following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."[3]

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[2] HEBR., III, 1.
[3] APOC., XIV, 4.

Example

ST. MARGARET OF CORTONA AND BLESSED MARGARET OF CITTÀ DI CASTELLO

Some people are inclined to think that past transgressions are of themselves an impediment to sanctity. This, however, is a mistake, as the only impediment to perfection is the present bad disposition of our will. Past sins, however grievous they may be, when we once have obtained forgiveness of them through sincere penance, do not hinder the soul from reaching a high standard of holiness, as is shown by the example of St. Margaret of Cortona.

This Saint, notwithstanding her previous offenses, reached so high a degree of perfection that she was honored by Jesus Christ Himself with the glorious title of His most dear daughter and the beloved spouse of His sacred Heart. Now, as she herself testified, she owed it to the efficacious intercession of the great Patriarch St. Joseph that she obtained the grace of a perfect conversion to God. Jesus Himself, who prizes most highly every sign of honor shown to His foster-father, spoke once to St. Margaret in these terms: "I wish, O Margaret, to make known to thee how greatly the devotion thou hast to My foster-father pleases me; but I desire that every day thou

wouldst render him whatever tribute of praise and honor thou canst, as he is most dear to My Heart." [4]

Another Margaret may well be proposed to us as an example of true devotion to St. Joseph. This is the Blessed Margaret of Città di Castello, of the Dominican Order. This servant of God was enriched with many graces precisely for being particularly devoted to St. Joseph and for having placed herself under his special protection.

She was born blind, but the Author of light endowed her with heavenly wisdom, which is hidden from the proud, but is copiously granted to the humble of heart. The divine Infant, out of special love for her, took His abode in her heart. There He kept His beloved servant in continual prayer and holy contemplation of the mysteries of His own life and of that of His blessed Mother and foster-father. Being well aware of the secret treasure she bore in her heart, Margaret used to say to those about her: "Oh, if you but knew what I experience in my soul, you would indeed wonder exceedingly."

It was only after her death that her sisters understood what she really meant by these last words. Her breast then being laid open, three precious stones were found embedded in her

[4] *Vita di S. Margherita da Cortona,* e BOLLAND, 22 Febr.

heart. On the first of these was impressed the image of Jesus, on the second that of Mary, and on the third that of St. Joseph together with the likeness of the Saint herself on bended knee before the holy Patriarch. This is a conclusive proof of the innumerable graces with which Blessed Margaret was abundantly rewarded in life and death, for having chosen as her advocate the glorious Patriarch St. Joseph.[5]

Prayer

O glorious St. Joseph, I venerate thee reigning now above all the choirs of heaven, and I humbly beg thee to obtain of thy Son for me the grace to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, to suffer patiently the many afflictions of this life, to preserve intact in my heart the sacred deposit of faith, and to trample under foot all sensual pleasures, in order that I may be worthy of being admitted to the table of the Lamb of God. Amen.

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[5] Baling., Cal., 13 April, Penna, in *Vita*.

Twenty-ninth Day

DEVOTION OF HOLY CHURCH TO ST. JOSEPH

"What ought to be done to the man whom the king is desirous to honor?"

(ESTHER, VI, 6.)

THE law of nature has it that we should show special deference to persons placed in a position of dignity, in so far as they bear, in a certain sense, a reflection of God's supreme dominion over the world. Absolutely speaking, Almighty God could very well govern all things directly by Himself; nevertheless, He chooses to make use of certain individuals as His instruments, to whom He in consequence communicates a portion of His own excellence and dignity. Now, it is precisely this excellence and dignity that moves us to honor and revere in an especial manner persons placed in exalted positions, as, for instance, rulers or magistrates in civil society.

But if it is just that we should honor for God's sake such as are vested with authority and possess some excellent quality in the order of nature, much more so is it God's will that

we should show a like honor to those saints who have consecrated their entire lives in honoring, praising, and serving Him, and by so doing have reproduced in themselves the divine perfections in a more excellent manner. For this reason Holy Church has ever held it a just and praiseworthy practise to honor and revere the saints and to show them a special devotion both interior and exterior. That is to say, not only should this devotion be fostered in our hearts, but we should also bear testimony of our internal sentiments of reverence toward the saints by words or actions done in their honor.

If we now pause to consider the remarkable sanctity with which the glorious Patriarch St. Joseph was adorned in life, as well as his unspeakable glory in heaven, there can be no doubt as to the legitimacy of the widespread devotion shown him by the faithful throughout the entire world. This devotion, moreover, may be said to have a ground of authority in the Sacred Book, for we see that the Evangelists St. Luke and St. Matthew were not content with merely mentioning frequently his saintly name, but they also took special care to couple it with the most holy name of Mary. This was as much as to show that as the holy Patriarch was the inseparable companion and faithful guardian of Mary in life and the fos-

ter-father of Jesus, true Son of Mary, so also it is but right that he should partake of the honor and devotion shown by men to Jesus and Mary.

But there is a still more convincing proof of the devotion due to St. Joseph, in the very manner of action pursued by Jesus and Mary toward him. The Son of God made Man and His blessed Mother were not content with honoring the holy Patriarch by interior acts of reverence. They also wished to show their respect toward him by exterior signs, acknowledging him to be the representative of God's will in the Holy Family and exactly submitting to all his orders and dispositions. It is, then, but just that we also should honor with special devotion that privileged just man upon whom Jesus and Mary were so lavish with testimonials of reverence and esteem.

* * *

The great dignity with which it pleased God to adorn St. Joseph makes him worthy of a special devotion on our part. This devotion is of a lower degree than that shown to the Mother of God, yet it is greater than that by which we honor all other saints in heaven.

However, it was not the will of God that the exterior manifestation of this devotion to the glorious Patriarch should spread at once throughout the Church. Hence we see that the

faithful were content for many centuries to venerate him only implicitly in those mysteries in which he had a share together with Jesus and Mary, such as the mysteries of the Incarnation, Circumcision, Adoration of the Magi, Presentation of Jesus in the Temple and Flight into Egypt. It was only in course of time that a special external devotion was paid to the holy Patriarch. But once this devotion was started, it spread so wonderfully, that it soon became universal both in the Religious Orders and in the Catholic Church at large.

It was decreed in the designs of Providence that faith in the mystery of the Incarnation should first be firmly implanted in Christian hearts before external devotion to St. Joseph should spread in the Church. There could then be no danger, on the part of the faithful, of believing that Jesus was the Son of St. Joseph by nature. Once the mystery of the virginal birth of Our Saviour was made known universally as a dogma of faith, the devotion to the holy Patriarch became a familiar practise with the faithful.

Let us learn from these wise dispositions of Providence to place all our trust in God, who "has ordered all things in measure, number and weight."[1]

* * *

[1] WISDOM, XI, 21.

The manner in which devotion to St. Joseph has spread of late and is even daily assuming greater proportions in the Church is truly a cause for wonder. Indeed, it would seem that by inspiring among the faithful an ever-increasing devotion to the holy Patriarch, Almighty God wished to recompense him for the humble and hidden life which he spent at Nazareth in the company of Jesus and Mary during well-nigh thirty years. Thus, it is written: "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." [2]

Now, since it is evidently the will of God that the glorious Patriarch St. Joseph should be honored and venerated daily more and more, every true son of Holy Church should have it at heart to promote, as far as he possibly can, this wholesome devotion, which not only redounds to the greater glory of Jesus and Mary, but also opens to Christianity at large a copious channel of heavenly graces.

Example

ST. JOSEPH PATRON OF CANADA

The sturdy colonists who left the country of St. Louis some centuries ago to settle in that

[2] Luke, xiv, 11.

large region in North America now called the Dominion of Canada, had it particularly at heart to promote in that distant land a true devotion to the glorious Head of the Holy Family.

In fact, in the year 1624, a special solemnity was held in the city of Quebec in honor of St. Joseph, as a fulfilment of a vow made to him. At this festival all the French Colonists and many Indians were present, and on this occasion the holy Patriarch was chosen as first patron of the country then called New France.[3]

The devotion of Canadians toward the Saint increased continually, to the extent that some years later, that is, in 1637, they chose him as patron of the whole country, in thanksgiving for the many favors which they had received from God through his mediation.[4]

Nor did this beautiful and wholesome devotion diminish among the people of Canada as time went on. The following is an instance of what we assert. Some years ago, through the efforts of a humble Religious, a small oratory was erected to St. Joseph, halfway up the slope of the mountain which rises in the middle of the city of Montreal. Later, this oratory became a center of pious pilgrimages, and as

[3] *Premier Etablissement de la Foy dans la Nouvelle France,* par le P. CHRETIEN DECLERQ, Paris, 1691.
[4] Le P. LEJEUNE, S. J., *Relation de 1637,* Ed. Québec, p. 7.

years went on, these pilgrimages increased in such numbers that it was first found necessary to build a shelter for the pilgrims. Soon after, a resident priest was attached to the chapel, that he might provide for the spiritual needs of the faithful drawn thither by the hope of receiving some favor, either spiritual or temporal, from the powerful St. Joseph. This movement continued increasing to the extent that numberless pilgrims now resort daily to this holy shrine, as to a place from which favors and blessings are poured down from Heaven.

The faithful who daily visit this pious sanctuary are not disappointed in their hopes, as is shown by the many votive offerings hanging on the walls of the holy edifice. These bear convincing testimony to the innumerable cures which take place daily in that hallowed spot.[5]

It is not without reason, therefore, that the people of Canada have placed their trust in the protection of the glorious Patriarch St. Joseph. To him they have recommended both their temporal interests and the preservation of their faith, and to him, no doubt, they are indebted for that sincere devotion to the Holy Catholic Church of which they are most loyal sons.

[5] Letter of Fr. A. Dion, May 28, 1910, in the "Annales de l'Archiconfrérie de St. Joseph, écho de la Paroisse St. Joseph de Paris."

Prayer

O Lord, Thou who dost exalt the humble of heart, I thank Thee with all the power of my soul for having ordained that Thy foster-father should be honored by Holy Church in such a visible manner. Grant, I beg of Thee, that this glorious Saint may ever become more venerated among the faithful, that many through him may be made partakers of the fruits of Redemption. Amen.

Thirtieth Day

ST. JOSEPH, PATRON OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

"No man was born upon earth . . . as Joseph, who was a man born prince of his brethren, the support of his family, the ruler of his brethren, the stay of the people."

(Ecclus., xlix, 16, 17.)

NO NARRATIVE in the Old Testament is so touching as the story of Joseph, the son of Jacob, who after having interpreted the dreams of Pharao, was released from imprisonment and raised to the dignity of viceroy of Egypt. "Thou shalt be over my house (Pharao said to him), and at the commandment of thy mouth all the people shall obey: only in the kingly throne will I be above thee. And again Pharao said to Joseph: Behold, I have appointed thee over the whole land of Egypt. And he took his ring from his own hand, and gave it into his (Joseph's) hand: and he put upon him a robe of silk, and put a chain of gold about his neck. And he made him go up into his second chariot, the crier proclaim-

ing that all should bow their knee before him, and that they should know he was made governor over the whole land of Egypt. And the king said again to Joseph: I am Pharao; and without thy commandment no man shall move hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. And he turned his name, and called him in the Egyptian tongue, The savior of the world." [1]

As the ancient Joseph is a figure of Mary's holy spouse, so we may imagine these words to have been spoken by Jesus Christ, the King of kings, to His foster-father, who, because of the charity which burned within him, received in heaven, as it were, a robe of glory when Almighty God appointed him Patron of the Universal Church. It was indeed becoming that he should have been honored so singularly who had been raised to the sublime dignity of spouse of the Queen of Heaven, and of foster-father of the Word Incarnate. These two persons, Jesus and Mary, he sedulously guarded as sacred deposits at the peril of his life.

It was therefore proper that he should be appointed protector and advocate of that Church which Jesus Christ has founded with His most precious blood, and to which Mary has been given as Mother. And the Church, faithfully interpreting the divine will and at the same time moved by gratitude for the many benefits

[1] GEN., XLI, 40, and following.

received from St. Joseph, desires nothing more than that the exalted dignity of the holy Patriarch should be universally acknowledged and that all the faithful should proclaim him their patron and protector.

* * *

In proclaiming St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church, the Sovereign Pontiffs seem to have wished to implicitly acknowledge the hidden but real influence which the holy Patriarch has exercised and still does exercise not only over the Church Militant, but also over the souls that are suffering in purgatory. It may be assumed that St. Joseph, through his powerful intercession, hastens the liberation of those souls. Furthermore, the patronage of St. Joseph may be said to extend in some way over the saints who reign with Christ in heaven. For there is not one who is not in some manner indebted to the holy Patriarch for the happy attainment of his eternal salvation, since to his wonderful guardianship was due the preservation of the Redeemer's life. The angels also must in some way acknowledge their dependence on the most holy spouse of Mary, since they are inferior to him in glory, and thus form, as it were, a crown for him in heaven.

But it is especially in regard to ourselves who are still paying the penalty of the transgression of our first parents in this land of

exile that St. Joseph exercises with special efficacy his all-powerful patronage. The more perfect a saint is in charity, the more eager is he in praying for us poor wayfarers here below, and the more efficacious are his prayers as he stands nearer the throne of God.

St. Joseph, therefore, whose charity is surpassed by that of no other saint, his holy spouse alone being excepted, prays for us sinners oftener and with greater efficacy than does any other saint. He even anticipates our requests, interpreting our desires and presenting our needs before the Throne of divine mercy. Wherefore, to him may be applied these words spoken of Jeremias: "This is a lover of his brethren and of the people of Israel: this is he that prayeth much for the people and for all the Holy City." [2]

* * *

As the patronage of St. Joseph extends over the entire Church, there is therefore no earthly necessity for which the holy Patriarch cannot efficaciously provide. No man on this earth can assist us in all our needs, since human mercy and power are necessarily limited. But so unbounded is the compassion which St. Joseph feels toward us, so great is his power in heaven, that his patronage is restricted neither by time nor place, and there is no man-

[2] 2 MACH., XV, 14.

ner of grace which he cannot obtain for us. His fatherly care extends to all our needs and embraces even our future wants. It seems, therefore, as if Jesus Christ Himself would say to us what Pharao once said to the Egyptians: "Go to Joseph; and do all that he shall say to you." [3]

St. Joseph's provident care extends, then, to all the faithful who have recourse to him with confidence. He asks of God for them whatever spiritual graces they may need to lead holy lives. Nor does he forget to obtain for them the temporal graces necessary for their eternal salvation. In fact, as the ancient Joseph, once in charge of the granaries of Pharao, procured food for the people of Egypt during the time of famine, so St. Joseph's solicitous care embraces the domestic needs of the faithful who trust in him and call on his help with filial confidence.

Example

LEOPOLD I, EMPEROR OF GERMANY

When the Roman Empire was on the verge of becoming the prey of the Turks because of its own internal divisions and of the alliance of the Protestants of Hungary with those infidels, the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph

[3] GEN., XLI, 55.

showed by evident signs how prepared they are at all times to succor the people who place their trust in their protection and invoke them with fervor and perseverance.

The Turkish army was already encamped around Vienna, laying siege to it, and was threatening to take this capital, when Leopold I, having previously procured the assistance of Poland and its pious king, John Sobieski, gained a triumphant victory mainly through the valor of this latter on September 12, 1683. In gratitude for this, the pious monarch asked permission of the Holy See to celebrate throughout Germany the feast of the Espousal of the Blessed Virgin with St. Joseph. The Holy Father willingly assented.[4]

The benefits which the pious emperor had already received from St. Joseph encouraged him to ask for new ones. Though three times married, Leopold had not as yet any male heir. He then turned with confidence to the pure spouse of Mary, and, in order to be more certain of obtaining his request, he solemnly proclaimed the glorious Patriarch the special Protector of the House of Austria. He had a silver statue made in his honor and ordered a procession to take place eight consecutive days,

[4] Malatesta Garuffi of Rimini, Introduction to the *Life of St. Joseph*; Venice, 1692, dedicated to Innocent XII.

during each of which, chosen orators celebrated the praises of the Saint.

The royal court and all Germany were soon in gala attire, for St. Joseph had heard the prayers of his clients. The pious empress had given birth to a son, whom Leopold, as a mark of gratitude, named Joseph. Moreover, the monarch vowed to raise another statue in honor of the glorious Patriarch in one of the public squares of Vienna. Unfortunately death prevented him from fulfilling his vow. Nevertheless, his son Joseph I fulfilled it, and on March 19, 1706, in his own presence and before the entire court, the votive statue was solemnly erected, after which the praises of the Saint were publicly recited.[5]

Since that time the name of Joseph was wont to be borne by one or another member of the archducal family, a whole branch of which today bears that name, being called the Josephine branch.

Prayer

O glorious St. Joseph, to whom God has confided, as to a most loving and powerful patron, His universal Church, protect, I beseech thee, in the first place, the Sovereign Pontiff, who is the Vicar of thy Son on earth; protect also

[5] See Fr. Joseph Patrignani, *Il divoto di S. Giuseppe;* Book I, Chap. 9.

all the prelates of Holy Church, and extend thy patronage over all the faithful, that both the pastors and their sheep may enjoy eternal happiness together in heaven. Amen.

Thirty-first Day

ST. JOSEPH, PROTECTOR OF CHRISTIANS

"Our life is in thy hand: only let my lord look favorably upon us, and we will gladly serve the king." (GEN. XLVII, 25.)

ONE of the greatest benefits that Almighty God has vouchsafed His Church during these latter times is without doubt the extraordinary and widespread increase of the devotion to the holy Patriarch St. Joseph. Catholics the world over may find in this wholesome devotion a most efficacious means for obtaining spiritual graces and insuring their eternal salvation.

Remarkable are the words of St. Teresa in this respect: "Would that I could persuade all men to foster devotion to this glorious Saint because of the singular proof that I have of the many favors he obtains for us of God. I have never known a person to have been truly devoted to St. Joseph and to have rendered him special honor without seeing him advance rapidly in virtue; because the holy Patriarch assists with special care those who recommend

themselves to him . . . Should the reader not believe my words, I only ask him for the love of God to make a trial and he will experience for himself what a grace it is to recommend oneself to this glorious Patriarch; but persons of prayer in particular should be specially devoted to him." [1]

We know that our principal duty in this life is prayer, for by prayer we may obtain whatever graces we stand in need of. Now, who is better able to teach us how to pray as we ought, that is, constantly, humbly and confidently, than St. Joseph? Who better than he can point out to us the royal road of Christian perfection, consisting in an entire conformity of our wills to that of Almighty God? Who better than the holy Patriarch is able to obtain for us from Jesus the graces and the spirit of fervor so necessary for the preservation of the spiritual life in the soul?

By a special disposition of Providence, St. Joseph was given the unheard-of privilege of being an eye-witness of the virtues practised by the sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary for well-nigh thirty years. He was thus able, by their schooling, to ascend to the highest spheres of contemplation. His entire life was one uninterrupted hymn of love, praise and thankfulness toward the Lord, his God and his all. To Him

[1] Life, Baglioni, 1723, t. I, c. 6, p. 22.

he had made a perfect holocaust of his sentiments, affections and desires, in order that he might live in perfect conformity with the sentiments, affections and desires of God Himself.

Let those persons have special recourse to St. Joseph who are consecrated to the service of God in either the sacerdotal or the religious state, and whose principal duty is to invoke the Lord, call on His name and proclaim His praises. It should be their particular care to ever keep the sacred flame of fervor in God's service kindled in their hearts. Let them take the holy Patriarch for their special patron and model, and ask of God with holy importunity for the grace of perseverance in the fulfilment of the duties imposed upon them by their religious profession or priestly ordination.

* * *

To keep alive the spirit of fervor in our souls, we should carefully avoid not only mortal, but likewise venial sin. It is true, venial sin does not destroy or diminish grace in us; nevertheless, it has the baneful effect of slackening the fervor of charity and preventing it from fully displaying its influence on our lives. As a consequence, the duties pertaining to divine service are done in a perfunctory manner, fruitlessly and without enthusiasm. Now, whoever wishes to avoid this perilous state of torpor and to entertain instead in his heart a holy hor-

ror of venial sin, should have recourse with confidence to St. Joseph, who throughout the course of his life was immune from even the least fault and imperfection, and, as a result, well merited to carry the God Made Man in his holy arms and to care for Him with all the affection of a loving father.

But there is one sin in particular which lessens, or more exactly, takes away entirely the fervor of charity: that is the sin of impurity. Alas, how many souls are made slaves to this fatal evil! What slaughter Satan causes by means of the depraved pleasures of sense and the allurements of the flesh! Now, a sure means to keep one's soul preserved from so contagious an evil is to foster a special devotion to the glorious Patriarch St. Joseph. As he was appointed guardian of Jesus, Innocence Itself, and of Mary, the Queen of virgins, so he will preserve his devout clients from all impurity and obtain for them the grace to serve God with clean hearts and chaste bodies.

* * *

If the protection of St. Joseph is so powerful during life in assisting us to serve God faithfully and to avoid every stain of sin, the more so will it be at the hour of our death; that is, in that tremendous moment upon which depends an eternity of either happiness or misery.

As the holy Patriarch had the enviable privi-

lege of being assisted at the hour of death by Jesus, his foster Son, and Mary, his immaculate spouse, it is but just that he should have been appointed by God to be the patron of the dying. Through him, therefore, we may obtain the inestimable grace of a true and sincere contrition for sin. He will help us to withstand the assaults of the evil one and to persevere to the end in the love of God. Happy they who are consoled and sustained on their death-bed by the loving care of the holy Patriarch! This assistance is for them a pledge of final triumph over the enemy of their souls; and, so, devotion to St. Joseph, inasmuch as it assures us of his assistance at the hour of death, is justly reckoned among the signs of predestination.

But in order to be certain of obtaining this assistance at the hour of death, it is necessary to ask for it often during life. It is also necessary to model one's life after his, as far as is possible, imitating especially his fervor in divine service and his complete abandonment to the dispositions of the divine will.

Example

THE PICTURE OF THE DEATH OF ST. JOSEPH

There once lived in a certain populous city a rich gentleman named Victorinus N., who had

passed the greater part of his life amid the pleasures of this world, caring nothing for either religion or God. His son Ferdinand having married a certain person against his father's will, was banished by him from home. As a result, the unfortunate youth, reduced almost to beggary, had no other resource than to devote himself to the art of painting, in order to procure for himself and his family the means of sustenance.

Years passed and Victorinus, now an old man, was seized with a serious illness, which by degrees grew mortal and soon brought him to the verge of death. Though baptized and educated in the Catholic Faith, he would not allow the subject of religion to be mentioned in his presence, although his pious wife and the venerable priest who had been summoned to his bedside, did all they could to induce him to think of his soul's welfare. But all their efforts were in vain.

One day there came to the house a young woman modestly dressed, who brought with her a picture which she desired to sell. She explained how her husband, who had painted the picture, had been obliged to abandon his profession because of disordered nerves, which rendered him incapable of applying himself to work. She had therefore come to offer this, his last work, to Mr. Victorinus, who she knew was

rich and generous, in the hope of receiving a little money wherewith to help on her destitute family.

The picture was a representation of St. Joseph on his deathbed, assisted by Jesus and the Blessed Virgin. The portrait was so striking and pleased the sick man so much, that he did not hesitate to purchase it. He moreover desired to have the picture hung on the wall of his room directly opposite his bed, so that he might continually enjoy the sight of that beautiful scene.

It now happened that, by constantly looking at the picture, the heart of Victorinus was by degrees softened and he began to repent of his past sins. One day he said to his wife: "I have a presentiment that my end is approaching; if I could only die as St. Joseph did, assisted by Jesus and Mary!" To which his wife, hardly able to repress her tears, replied: "O Victorinus, receive the holy sacraments; and death, which I pray God may still be far distant, will not be hard for you; nay, it will be made easy and sweet through the intercession of the Saint whom you see in that picture."—"Do you really believe so, Anna?" the sick man asked anxiously; "I can hardly believe that St. Joseph should wish to have anything to do with a person of ill-will like myself. You know how harshly I have treated my son; I have even

torn to pieces his letters without opening them. Oh! if I could only see him now!"—"Your son Ferdinand was here in this very city fifteen days ago," answered his wife; "that picture which you see is his, and the money which you gave for it has saved him and his family from dying of starvation."—"What! My son in this city!" exclaimed Victorinus. "Send for him at once and tell him that his father's heart is burning with the desire to be reconciled with him. But let him not come before to-morrow, because I wish first to reconcile myself with God."

The sick man received the last sacraments on that very day with sincere devotion. The following morning, the desired reconciliation between father and son took place. Words fail to express how touching that meeting was. Victorinus was trembling with emotion when Ferdinand and his two little children, who had been born since the separation, entered the room of the dying man. "My son," exclaimed Victorinus, "do you know that with your talent you have brought about my reconciliation with God, with your family, and with yourself?"—"Do not speak thus," interrupted Ferdinand, "for, after God, we owe all our joy on this occasion to St. Joseph. To his protection I recommended my little family and my dear parents. And it is precisely he who has preserved us

from death, and he now gives us the consolation of this embrace." A few days later, Victorinus, surrounded by his family, passed peacefully from this life to the other, sweetly murmuring with his last breath the holy names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Prayer

O glorious St. Joseph, behold I choose thee to-day for my special patron in life and at the hour of death. Preserve and increase in me the spirit of prayer and fervor in the service of God; remove far from me every kind of sin and assist me at the hour of my death, in order that I may breathe forth my soul into the hands of Jesus and Mary. Amen.

PRAYERS IN HONOR OF ST. JOSEPH

LITANY OF ST. JOSEPH

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.
God, the Father of Heaven,[1]
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,
God the Holy Ghost,
Holy Trinity, One God,
Holy Mary,[2]
St. Joseph,
Renowned offspring of David,
Light of patriarchs,
Spouse of the Mother of God,
Chaste guardian of the Virgin,
Foster-father of the Son of God,
Diligent protector of Christ,
Head of the Holy Family,
Joseph most just,
Joseph most chaste,
Joseph most prudent,

[1] Have mercy on us.
[2] Pray for us.

Joseph most strong,
Joseph most obedient,
Joseph most faithful,
Mirror of patience,
Lover of poverty,
Model of artisans,
Glory of home life,
Guardian of virgins,
Pillar of families,
Solace of the wretched,
Hope of the sick,
Patron of the dying,
Terror of demons,
Protector of Holy Church,
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, spare us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
V. He made him the lord of His household.
R. And prince over all His possessions.

Let us pray

O God, who in Thine ineffable providence didst vouchsafe to choose blessed Joseph to be the spouse of Thy most holy Mother: grant, we beseech Thee, that we may have him for our in-

tercessor in heaven, whom we venerate as our protector on earth, who livest and reignest, world without end. Amen.

Indulgence of 300 days, once a day. Sacred Cong. of Rites, March 18, 1909.

A PRAYER COMPOSED BY LEO XIII ESPECIALLY FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER

When the recitation of the Rosary does not precede this prayer, the words in italics are omitted.

To thee, O blessed Joseph, do we fly in our tribulation, and *having implored the help of thy most holy spouse, we* confidently crave thy patronage *also*. Through that charity which bound thee to the immaculate, virgin Mother of God, and through the paternal love with which thou didst embrace the Child Jesus, we humbly beseech thee graciously to regard the inheritance which Jesus Christ hath purchased by His blood, and with thy power and strength to aid us in our necessities.

O most watchful guardian of the Divine Family, defend the chosen children of Jesus Christ; O most loving father, ward off from us every contagion of error and corrupting influence; O our most mighty protector, be propitious to us and from heaven assist us in this our struggle with the power of darkness; and, as once thou didst rescue the Child Jesus from deadly peril, so now protect God's holy Church from the

snares of the enemy and from all adversity: shield, too, each one of us by thy constant protection, so that, supported by thine example and thine aid, we may be able to live piously, to die holily, and to obtain eternal happiness in heaven. Amen.

I. Indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines, to all who shall add this prayer to the recitation of the Rosary during the month of October.—Leo XIII, Aug. 15, 1889.

II. Indulgence of 300 days, once a day during the year, even when recited privately.—Leo XIII, Sept. 21, 1889.

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